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Worker sues over alleged CW-1 fraud. PAGE 3

Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

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AT HR 560 HEARING

Triple J's Sablan gives biz's side

By JON PEREZ
jon_perez@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Sablan

As a representative of private company Triple J Enterprises, former public auditor Michael S. Sablan represented the perspective of businesses in last week's House Natural Resources Committee hearing on a bill that seeks to resolve the CNMI's labor and immigration issue.

In much of his testimony at the hearing on H.R. 560, which was introduced by Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (Ind-MP), Sablan underscored the unique labor needs of the

See SABLAN on Page 4

WISH NIGHT ERWIN ENCINARES

Make a Wish Guam and CNMI Chapter executive director Eric Tydingco holds the microphone for 2016 wish recipient Chloe Bernal at the annual "Black Ties & Zories" Wish Night last Friday, March 1, at the Hyatt Regency Saipan's ballroom.

Wanted: Dealers for Las Vegas Night

By ERWIN ENCINARES
erwin_encinares@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Rotary Club of Saipan is reiterating its call for dealers for its Las Vegas Night fundraiser this month at the Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan.

According to club vice president Brian Clayton during last week's meeting at the Hyatt Regency Saipan, Imperial Pacific Resort has not responded yet to lend their dealers to the club's annual fundraiser.

"Without the assistance of the casino, Las Vegas Night might be a

See WANTED on Page 4

3 junket operators for casino OK'd

By JON PEREZ
jon_perez@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Three junket operators—Bula Mula LLC, High Tides LLC, and Stellar Paradise LLC—have been approved to work with Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC and bring in big gamblers.

JON PEREZ

The owners of the three new junket operator companies that have been approved to do business with Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC attend last week's Commonwealth Casino Commission meeting at the Joeten-Kiyu Public Library video conference room.

The Commonwealth Casino Commission approved the applications of the three junket companies for a provisional license during last week's meeting at the Joeten-Kiyu Public Library video conference room.

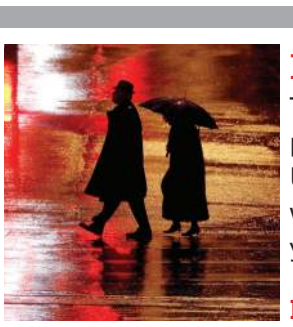
Junket operators invite or attract bigtime players and other VIPs to casinos. They usually offer first-class accommodations—from travel to hotel and other personalized perks.

Owners Zhang Hong (Bula Mula), Dong Jiming (Hight Tides), and Ma

See 3 JUNKET on Page 4

INSIDE

NATION
A tornado roared into southeast Alabama and killed at least 23 people.
PAGE 14



FOCUS
The number of pedestrians killed on U.S. roads last year was the highest in 28 years.
PAGE 17

LIFE & STYLE
The family of Michael Jackson weren't surprised to learn about an HBO documentary about him.
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Local

Fiscal Affairs to also look into 'unforeseen circumstances'

By JON PEREZ
jon_perez@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Senate Fiscal Affairs Committee intends to take into consideration "unforeseen circumstances" when they deliberate on the fiscal year 2020 budget of the CNMI government.

This early, the administration of Gov. Ralph DLG Torres is already looking at a budget shortfall following the widespread devastation wrought by Super Typhoon Yutu in October last year.

Yutu, which particularly devastated Saipan and Tinian, caused significant damage to homes and other infrastructure, which also spilled over to the CNMI economy as some businesses had to also close down due to their facilities being destroyed and with zero tourist activity.

Committee chair Sen. Jude U. Hofschneider (R-Tinian) said unpredictable circumstances have to be taken into consideration when they sit down to hammer out the budget.

"We have to take heed on the unforeseen circumstances like Medical Referral, [the Department of Public Safety], natural disasters, etc. All this play a key part in any given [year] in terms of government function and operations," he said.

"That's the reason we are laying the foundation right now. Now, that we have fully known the fiscal year 2018's situation, the [Fiscal Affairs] committee is working in getting more information on the actual collection for the first two quarters of fiscal year 2019."

He added the information about fiscal years 2018 and 2019 would help the Legislature prepare for fiscal year 2020. "The information that we got from the result of this and the information that we're going to get in the next few weeks, with respect to first two quarters of collection and expense will give us an idea of on how are we going to approach [fiscal year] 2020," he said.

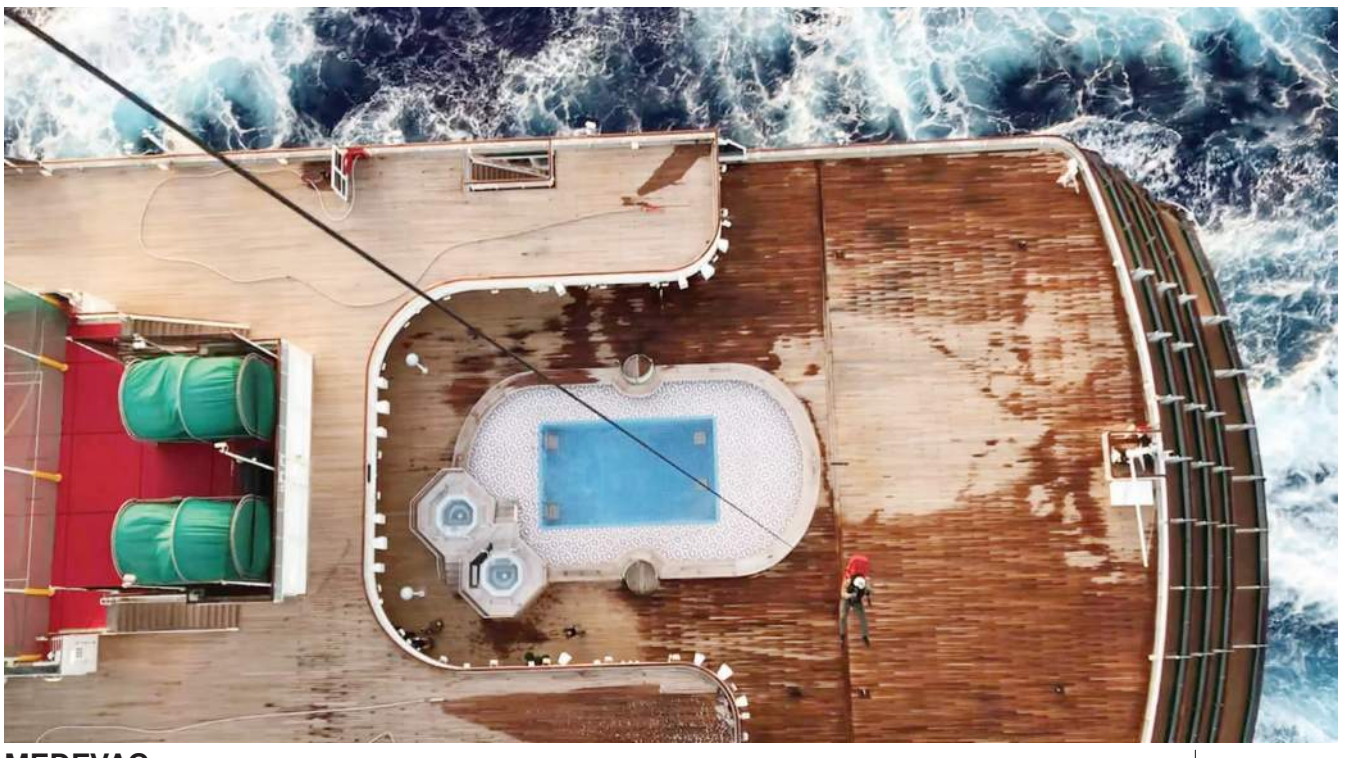
Hofschneider said they are also looking at areas where the government had overruns, as they need to anticipate a potential shortfall on revenue projection at the start of 2019, an economic effect brought by Yutu. "Now that we are in [fiscal year] 2019 going to [fiscal year] 2020, we need to see the first two quarters on how the Yutu experience affected us in terms of collection of revenues."

In his report after reviewing the fiscal year 2018 budget, Legislative Bureau fiscal analyst David Demapan pointed out that the CNMI general fund incurred a total of $25.9 million deficit and the budgetary basis exceeded the budgeted amount by $27.1 million.

Eight government agencies and departments were tagged as major contributors to the overrun: Medical Referral ($13,158,509), Medicaid local expenses ($6,392,038), Department of Public Safety ($1,854,594), disaster expenditures ($1,204,508), Department of Corrections ($1,137,728), Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services ($672,255), Department of Finance ($249,755), and Rota ($220,752).

Hofschneider said there won't be any way for local patients not to use medical referral. "[But] we need to find the driving force behind the upward trend. It can be any reason and it will be hard, but we need to know. So, we could focus on how to narrow it down. Close the gap."

"There's absolutely…no way for us not to use medical referral and sending our patients out. The facilities and specialists are not all available on the island. But [the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp.] management is doing their best to treat everybody here, based on the availability of the services."



MEDEVAC
Naval Air Crewman 2nd Class Ty Nichols, assigned to the "Island Knights" of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 25, is lowered to the deck of the MV *Arcadia* to provide emergency assistance to a cruise passenger in distress during a medical evacuation.
U.S. NAVY/HSC-25

See story on Page 3

Eco-friendly, Guam-based company heads to Saipan

By ERWIN ENCINARES
erwin_encinares@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

A Guam-based brand that is fighting climate change has expanded into the CNMI through a partnership with local brand Tribe Marianas.

Shorty's, a brand that sells accessories and seeks to do so in a sustainable and eco-friendly manner, has partnered with Tribe Marianas to offer their products to residents of Saipan. Last Saturday, they set up a two-day pop-up store outside Tribe Marianas, giving away free backpacks, school supplies, and even some of their products.

The pop-up store reportedly gave away over 100 zories that are made of recycled materials, along with about 600 backpacks. They also gave away books and other reading materials, along with school supplies.

"…The entire Shorty's brand was thought of while I was sitting on a beach in Chalan Kanoa, so I thought it right that Saipan should be a large part of our market," Shorty's founder Kai Murrell told *Saipan Tribune* in an interview Saturday afternoon.

"We wanted to be able to launch [on] both Saipan and [in] Guam as a small company and grow in both locations because both [islands] are home," he said.

Murrell noted that they recently released a snapback hat that is 100-percent organic and entirely biodegradable—except for the snap. "I haven't figured out how to do the snaps because they need to be [sturdier]," he said. "We are trying to do everything about our company as eco-friendly as possible," adding that all of the company's products are either biodegradable or made of recycled products.

Murrell's day job consists of disaster relief work for the Ayuda Foundation, along with medical missions on other islands.

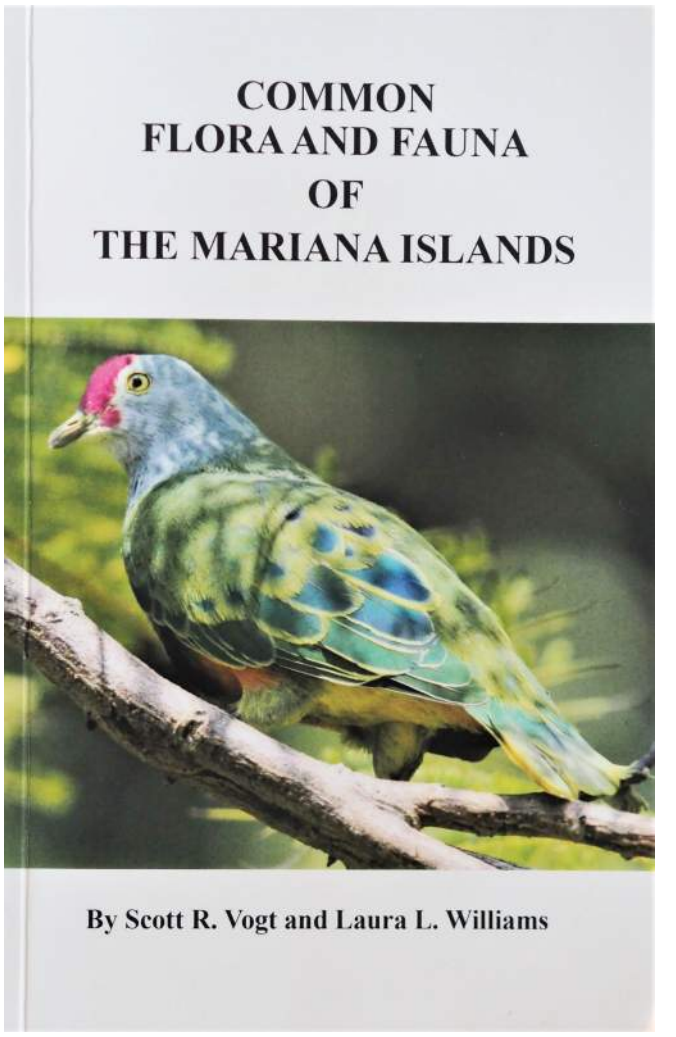
Tribe Marianas general manager and cofounder T.J. DLC Manglona told *Saipan Tribune* that the eco-friendly mission of Shorty's is something that Tribe Marianas would support.

"We are very open to collaborating with everybody, especially those from other islands," he said. "When Kai approached us with the concept of his brand, we felt it was just right."

"Everything he sells is made of biodegradable products and recycled products, so why not have a pop-up here and support the cause," he added.

Those interested in getting Shorty's products may visit Tribe Marianas at the D'Torres building on Middle Road, Garapan. They are open from 11am to 7pm from Monday to Saturday.

Book highlights Marianas flora and fauna



Common Flora and Fauna of the Mariana Islands mid-February 2019 was published by Mariana Islands Books to update the 2004 version of the same title.
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

By ERWIN ENCINARES
erwin_encinares@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

A book highlighting the plants and animals of the CNMI was recently published to educate residents and visitors alike.

Common Flora and Fauna of the Mariana Islands mid-February 2019 was published by Mariana Islands Books to update the 2004 version of the same title by Scott Vogt, a biologist with experience in the Marianas, and Laura L. Williams. The two also authored the 2004 version of the book.

As of publication, the updated 2019 version is not being sold yet in the CNMI; it is, however, available at the University of Guam bookstore.

"The National Park bookstores on Saipan and Guam will be selling [the book]," said Naoko Vogt in an email to *Saipan Tribune*. "They told us it will probably be between $22 and $24."

Saipan Tribune verified yesterday that the American Memorial Park bookstore had over 200 copies of the 2004 version of the book and would be selling the updated version once all older versions are sold out. The bookstore representative added that they helped the Public School System secure 300 copies of the new 2019 version.

"Our main goal is to give residents and visitors a guide [to] the animals and trees they are most likely to see when out on a hike or near their house or hotel," Vogt said in an email. "There are no other guides like this for the Marianas and most people have an interest in nature, so with this book, they can identify what they see and learn something about it."

The book consists of 164 pages that include pictures and descriptions of the common flora and fauna, or plants and animals, in the Mariana Islands and was first released on Feb. 10, 2019.

Worker sues over alleged CW-1 fraud

A Filipino worker is suing the owner of a manpower company after accusing her of defrauding him by making him pay for illegal fees for a promised CW1 visa application that she never filed.

Segundo Lapeceros Jr.is suing Edita Capilitan Cruz, who runs her businesses under names such as W.E.C. Manpower Services, W.E.C. General Enterprises, W.E.C. Enterprises, W.E. Cruz Catering, Mega Marianas, and Mega Marianas Transport.

Jane Mack of the Micronesian Legal Services Corp.-Marianas Office filed the lawsuit on behalf of Lapeceros before the Superior Court over the weekend.

Lapeceros is suing Cruz for breach of contract, conversion, fraud, violation of Unfair and Deceptive Acts and Practices statute, and violation of the Alien and Immigrant Consumer Protection Act.

He wants Cruz held liable to pay him $14,962 in damages, plus court costs and attorney's fees. He alleged that he paid Cruz a total of $2,250.

As of press time, *Saipan Tribune* was still trying to obtain comments from Cruz.

According to Mack, Cruz breached the contract she entered into with Lapeceros to have his wife work for Cruz's catering company as a CW-1 worker and for Cruz to process the paperwork for the CW-1 status of Lapeceros' wife.

Mack said Cruz also breached the contract she entered into with Lapeceros to process the paperwork to renew his CW-1 status.

Mack said Cruz is guilty of fraud on Lapeceros for fraudulently inducing him to pay money for services she had no intention of providing.

The lawyer said Cruz violated the Unfair Acts and Practices statute with her false advertising that she was hiring foreign workers for a manpower business, implying that she would do so legally.

Mack said Cruz violated the Alien and Immigrant Protection Act by charging processing fees to hire alien workers, keeping the fees while failing to process the paperwork.

Mack stated in the complaint that Cruz advertised her business as a manpower agency and a service to process paperwork for foreign workers who sought employment as CW-1 workers.

Lapeceros wanted to be employed as a foreign worker and Cruz allegedly offered to hire him as a commercial cleaner for her business.

Mack said Lapeceros paid Cruz $500 on Jan. 3, 2016, and another $350 three days later.

Lapeceros allegedly did not get any receipt for these payments, but a receipt for $500 was issued in his name dated Jan. 29, 2016.

Mack said Cruz filed a petition to hire Lapeceros as a CW-1, and the petition was received by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services on Feb. 8, 2016.

Eventually, Lapeceros' CW-1 petition was approved, effective May 5, 2016 to March 20, 2017.

Lapeceros exited the CNMI and returned in September 2016.

Mack said the plaintiff worked for Cruz starting Sept. 15, 2016 on his CW-1 permit.

While his initial CW-1 petition was pending, Lapeceros and Cruz allegedly spoke about the possibility of hiring Lapeceros' wife. Mack said Cruz lied to Lapeceros and allegedly offered to hire Lapeceros's wife as a kitchen helper.

Mack said Cruz offered to prepare the necessary forms to hire the wife as a CW-1 worker and to submit the petition for her employment to USCIS.

Cruz allegedly asked for $950 to process Lapeceros' wife's papers for the position.

Mack said that, while Cruz had a catering business and used kitchen workers in it, she did not have any intention of submitting the paperwork to USCIS to hire Lapeceros's wife as a CW-1 worker.

The lawyer said Lapeceros did not know that Cruz had lied about her intention to hire his wife through the legal CW-1 process.

On March 15, 2016, Lapeceros allegedly paid Cruz $950 so that she could process the CW-1 papers and file a petition for his wife to be hired as her CW-1 worker.

Mack said the plaintiff did not get a receipt.

Mack said Cruz fraudulently promised that she would file all of the necessary CW-1 paperwork for Lapeceros' wife's employment with USCIS.

In June through September 2016, Lapeceros asked Cruz for information about the status of the CW-1 petition for his wife.

Cruz allegedly told Lapeceros that she had filed the CW-1 permit paperwork to hire his wife.

In mid-September 2016, when he returned to the CNMI, Lapeceros also asked Cruz about renewing his status.

Lapeceros was worried that his status expired in March 2017, and that Cruz would need to renew his status promptly because of CW-1 cap issues.

Mack said Cruz told Lapeceros that she intended to renew his contract.

Cruz allegedly demanded that Lapeceros pay $450 as renewal processing fees.

On Sept. 15, 2016, Lapeceros allegedly paid Cruz $450 to process the renewal of his CW-1 permit but did not get a receipt.

In October 2016, Cruz allegedly told Lapeceros that she had submitted his renewal paperwork by the end of September 2016 and that he did not need to worry about the cap issue.

Mack said Cruz knowingly and fraudulently lied and misdirected Lapeceros to cover up her actions in not filing the CW-1 paperwork for his wife's employment and in not filing the CW-1 paperwork for renewal of his employment.

In late October 2016, Lapeceros allegedly learned from an employee of Cruz that Lapeceros' wife's CW-1 petition had never been mailed out.

Lapeceros also learned from an employee of Cruz that his CW-1 renewal petition had never been mailed out.

In November 2016, after hearing that the petitions had not been mailed, Lapeceros confronted Cruz and Cruz allegedly assured him that she had a way of sending and processing papers and it would get done.

In December 2016, Lapeceros demanded his money back from Cruz. Cruz allegedly told him to return in January 2017.

Mack said Lapeceros tried to contact Cruz in January 2017, but she never answered his calls.

Mack said no receipt for mailing or USCIS receipt was ever produced or given to Lapeceros relating to a CW-1 petition for his wife and to a renewal of his CW-1 status.

Mack said Cruz never filed any petition with USCIS for Lapeceros's wife and for renewal of his CW-1 status.

Mack said Cruz never paid any money back to Lapeceros.

"Lapeceros suffered great harm from Cruz's trickery, fraud, and deceit," the lawyer said, adding that plaintiff did not look for other work or another employer.

The lawyer said Lapeceros lost his CW-1 status and faces immigration consequences.

Mack said Lapeceros lost income from the work that he would have earned as a CW-1 worker in 2016-2017.

Mack said plaintiff also lost the anticipated benefit from the employment of his wife. ***(Ferdie De La Torre)***

HSC-25 rescues distressed cruise ship passenger

ANDERSEN AIR FORCE BASE—Sailors from the Guam-based "Island Knights" of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 25 provided emergency assistance to a cruise passenger in distress early Monday, March 4.

At approximately 9:45pm Sunday, March 3, HSC-25 was notified by U.S. Coast Guard Sector Guam that a passenger aboard MV Arcadia was experiencing a medical emergency. After Arcadia reached within helicopter range of Guam, a rescue mission was launched at 5:45am Monday, by HSC-25 Alert Search and Rescue led by aircraft commander Lt. Richard Schuster. The passenger in distress was recovered via helicopter hoist and returned to U.S. Naval Hospital Guam in stable condition.

"Flying to a cruise ship was a unique and challenging medevac experience," said Schuster. "We continually practice to prevail when needed most. The Arcadia was very helpful in positioning the ship, allowing Rescue 11's crew to stabilize the patient on the rescue hoist and get him safely in the aircraft. We were able to expeditiously transport the patient, thanks to our Flight Surgeon Lt. Kumetz and SAR Medical Technician HM2 Bowen."

The incident was the fifth emergency call to HSC-25 by U.S. Coast Guard Sector Guam and marks two recoveries during search-and-rescue and medical evacuations in 2019 to date.

"I could not be more proud of our maintenance and flight crews this morning," said HSC-25 commanding officer Cmdr. Frank Loforti. "Yet again, the Island Knights executed a flawless MEDEVAC [medical evacuation], I'm honored to be part of the winning team."

HSC-25 provides a multi-mission rotary wing capability for units in the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations and maintains a Guam-based 24-hour search-and-rescue and medical evacuation capability, directly supporting U.S. Coast Guard and Joint Region Marianas. HSC-25 is the Navy's only forward-deployed MH-60S expeditionary squadron. ***(Amphibious Force 7th Fleet)***

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IT&E, former employee seek settlement conference

IT&E and a former employee who is suing it for alleged discrimination made a joint request to the federal court to set a settlement conference in the case.

PTI Pacifica Inc., which owns IT&E, and Terry Kingto, through their lawyers, asked the U.S. District Court for the NMI to schedule the case for a settlement conference before Judge Alex R. Munson on April 2, 2019.

Frink

Mafnas Jr.

PTI Pacifica and Kingto, through their respective counsel Sean E. Frink and Jose S. P. Mafnas Jr., said they have learned that Munson will be on Saipan and conducting settlement conferences during the first week of April.

Frink and Mafnas said Munson has an opening in his schedule to conduct a settlement conference in this case on April 2.

The two lawyers said they have conferred and determined that it is likely to be in the court's best interest for the parties and their counsel to meet with Munson in order to try to resolve this case by mutual agreement.

The lawyers asked the court that the April 2 case management conference be rescheduled to mid-May 2019 so that the parties and their counsel may expend their energies on attempting to resolve the case by agreement rather than preparing for what will likely be a contentious litigation.

Kingto filed last year the discrimination lawsuit against PTI Pacifica and several of its employees for allegedly assigning her to Guam and subsequently terminating her because of her age.

Kingto, who is over 40 years old, is suing the defendants for violations of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Age Discrimination Employment Act, and wrongful termination.

Kingto earlier asked the court to find the defendants to have wrongfully terminated her by unlawfully retaliating against her for opposing practices reasonably believed to be in violation of the ADA and ADEA.

The plaintiff has demanded payment of compensatory and punitive damages in the amount of $200,000. She sought payment of liquidated damages in an amount to be determined at trial for defendants' violation of ADEA.

PTI Pacifica has denied the allegations. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

COPE NORTH U.S. AIR FORCE/MASTER SGT JT MAY III

Members from the U.S. Air Force, Japan Air Self-Defense Force, and Royal Australian Air Force prepare for movement during exercise Cope North 19 on Tinian on Feb 28, 2019. COPE North is an annual multilateral U.S. Pacific Air Forces-sponsored field training exercise focused on combat air forces large-force employment and mobility air forces humanitarian assistance and disaster relief training to enhance interoperability among U.S., Australian and Japanese forces.

SABLAN

From Page 1

Commonwealth.

"Because of [the CNMI's] small population and the isolated nature of our community from the mainland United States, we have historically relied on foreign workers to supplement the available local labor force in order to fill jobs in our public sector and in our largely tourism-based, service-oriented economy," he said.

Sablan said his testimony reflects Triple J's stand on the issues and aligns with the stance of the Northern Marianas Business Alliance Corp., the Saipan Chamber of Commerce, the Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the CNMI Chapter of the Society of Human Resource Managers, where their company is also a member of.

The NMBC, represented by president Alex Sablan, also spoke at the hearing.

Michael Sablan, who worked for eight years as public auditor for the CNMI government, said that some people in insular areas like the CNMI see the federal government as an authority that lacks the full understanding of their unique situations.

"In fact, some of the immigration issues decisions under review in this committee confirm that view. But today we can feel less inconsequential or misunderstood, when our own [delegate] now shares key responsibility for federal policy in the islands and can call a hearing to question these decisions and offer legislation to mitigate their impact on the insular areas."

The committee hearing is one of the initiatives being made by Delegate Sablan, in providing solutions to the consequences that came about when the Consolidated Natural Resources Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-22), which extended federal immigration policies to the CNMI in 2009.

The hearing is also related to the decision of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to remove the eligibility of citizens from the Philippines from the H-2B worker visa.

In his testimony, Triple J's Sablan cited a U.S. Government Accountability Office report to the U.S. Congress that showed that the CNMI labor force, composed of 29,215 workers in 2016 with a 50-50 percentage between foreign and U.S. workers, dropped in 2006, with U.S. workers at 25 percent of the total labor force.

Sablan said the ratio of U.S. to foreign workers improved over the years. "It is also an improvement in the number of U.S. workers employed, which increased by nearly 2,000 over the 10-year period. Our experience at Triple J shows slightly better results. Ten years ago, 70 percent of our employees on Saipan were foreign. We have reversed that worker mix. Today, of our 280 Saipan employees, 70 percent are U.S. workers."

"The remaining 30 percent are foreign workers, primarily nationals of the Philippines, who are difficult to replace with U.S. workers despite our best efforts to recruit from the U.S. mainland, the Freely Associated States in Micronesia, Puerto Rico, and Guam. These workers have unique skills, most of whom are so embedded in our businesses after decades of employment that they very difficult to replace."

He added that Triple J will continue to emphasize U.S. workers. "Triple J has spent and will continue to spend considerable resources to recruit U.S. workers living in the CNMI, and try to attract those in the U.S. to move to our beautiful islands to fill the jobs needed in our businesses."

"We are aware of other businesses [that] have invested in similar efforts as well. Despite our best collective efforts over the years, the unfortunate reality is that U.S. workers are difficult to recruit and are hesitant to relocate due to a number of factors."

Sablan is also Triple J's Finance and Administration vice president.

GAO report

In a report that he presented to the committee, David Gootnick, GAO International Affairs and Trade director, said the CNMI economy has recovered over the last four years after record lows more than a decade ago. "Growth and overall employment rose in 2016 and 2017, and the demand for CW permits exceeded for the first time. In 2017 to 2018, minimum wage more than doubled and then reached federal minimum wage."

He said the CNMI's 2018 gross domestic product would be impacted by Super Typhoon Yutu, which hit the islands in October. "The typhoon damaged homes and infrastructure, and the [Marianas Visitors Authority] data created significant but temporary decline in tourist arrivals."

Gootnick added that the CNMI remains dependent on foreign labor even after 10 years after the CNRA was enacted. "GAO's analysis of the CNMI tax data [showed] foreign workers [comprise] over half of total employment in 2016. In 2017, if all [foreign workers] were removed, the most likely result would be an economy 37 to 50 percent below the 2015 level."

He said that DHS data also showed a decline in approved CW-1 permits from fiscal year 2017 (12,889) to 2018 (8,995), the number of H-2B visas, which often fill construction jobs, increased from 0 to 3,058. DHS, however, removed the Philippines from the list of countries eligible for the H-2B visa program. Nearly two-third of over 3,000 H-2B visa holders were in the construction trades.

"As you know the Workforce Act has established restriction on CW permits for construction and this appears to have caused large construction firms, amongst others, to move to H-2B visas."

"DHS removal will make it more difficult in rebuilding after the typhoon and hotel construction," added Gootnick.

WANTED

From Page 1

challenge this year. We are still trying to confirm if the casino can provide dealers," he reported to the club members.

According to Clayton, several previous Las Vegas Nights had several dealers from the casino volunteering to deal the table games, among others.

"We have not yet received a response," he told club members. "Please reach out to volunteers from the past that have assisted us with the event because I believe we are going to need them," he said. "I don't think we would be able to have that as a resource…this year," he added, referring to Imperial Pacific dealers.

He emphasized that the dealers were a huge help in previous years. One of the more problematic games that is offered in the event is craps. According to Clayton, not too many people on island know how to deal the game.

"We are asking because we don't know if the casino would be providing dealers for this event," Clayton said in an interview Tuesday…They have in the past and they had been very supportive of it. We just have to ask for volunteers in the public."

"There are a lot of people that have helped us in previous years, so we are hoping they could help us again this year," he added.

The 2018 Las Vegas Night that was initially slated for November 2018 was moved to March 30, 2019, due to Super Typhoon Yutu, which struck the CNMI in late October 2018.

The prizes for the annual fundraiser include a grand prize of a 2019 Mitsubishi Mirage G4 or $10,000; a second grand prize of $3,000; third prize of $2,000; a fourth prize of $1,000; and a fifth prize of $500, along with door prizes as well. Winners are selected by raffle draw.

The event would be held at the Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan on March 30, 2019, from 6pm to 12am.

Clayton noted in a previous interview that tickets to Las Vegas Night may be bought at Megabyte Saipan, the McDonald's Saipan headquarters in Dandan, through Rotary Club members, and through the Northern Marianas Protection and Advocacy Systems Inc.

3 JUNKET

From Page 1

Hongyi (Stellar Paradise) were represented by lawyer Michael Dotts when they attended last week's CCC monthly meeting.

The only other junket operator whose provisional license CCC has already approved is Big Bang Entertainment.

CCC executive director Edward Deleon Guerrero said the three junket operators still need to complete their documentation requirements. "We're still working with them to get those documents, but they already have the license. They are ready to operate here. Last week, we did the final junket agreement between IPI and them."

"They are here to set up their bank accounts and all of their other operational requirements. They have the business license and this is also the first time they get the chance to meet with the commissioners. …Prior to that, they have been with our staff."

He said the commission is vetting four more junket operators after a fifth one backed out. They are also still accepting other applicants for junket operators. "We're not going to put a limit on the number of junket operators."

Sablan said they are also looking at how junket operators work in Australia. "That's a little bit less in restrictions. But we are still requiring everyone that does business in gaming to follow local and federal requirements, particularly with the Bank Secrecy Act."

"In [BSA], there's the requirement for the anti-money laundering programs and we want to make sure that every junket operator understands the rules and complies with those requirements. We [also] require every junket applicant to have a CNMI business license and CNMI bank account."

He added that the CCC also monitors the revenue of a junket operator, as part of their function. "So, in a sense, when the junket operator makes money, IPI is taxed on it and so is the operator. We are going to monitor that as part of our government function. CCC is allowed to look into their [junket operators] books and bank accounts/records."

"We have done this before to Big Bang [Entertainment]. We monitor their monthly activities. Whatever they report as their income, we send our auditors in to [check] to make sure that whatever tax they need to pay are properly assessed and paid."

Help for Mangkhut and Yutu survivors available

Disaster assistance information is still available for survivors who suffered damages and property loss due to Typhoon Mangkhut and Super Typhoon Yutu.

Federal Emergency Management Agency and the U.S. Small Business Administration continue to provide assistance at the Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center on Beach Road in Susupe. The hours of operation of the Disaster Loan Outreach Center are 9am to 6pm, Tuesday through Saturday. The DLOC is closed on Sundays and Mondays.

The emphasis for assistance is to meet the long-term needs of businesses and individuals.

Businesses or individuals unable to visit the DLOC may obtain information by calling SBA's toll-free number: 1-800-659-2955 (TTY 1-800-877-8339) or visit SBA at Disaster Loan Assistance.

Survivors of the typhoons who have registered for assistance with FEMA have easy access to a toll-free helpline that can answer many of their questions.

To access the helpline, call the registration number, 800-621-FEMA (3362); select language, enter a zip code, and then select option "2" for the helpline. Callers should have their disaster registration and Social Security numbers available.

A TTY number, 800-462-7585, is available to assist the hearing and speech impaired. ***(PR)***

Precinct 2 forum on Wednesday

The "Our Sense of Place" forum, hosted by Precinct 2 Rep. Tina Sablan, is set for Wednesday, March 6, at WSR Elementary School cafeteria, starting at 5:30pm.

This free public forum is a follow-up to the meeting Sablan held last October, and will include a presentation of interactive maps developed for the precinct, and a summary of valued places and concerns highlighted by community members. This week, participants will be asked to help prioritize the issues they see as important for restoring and revitalizing their villages.

Precinct 2 includes Chalan Kanoa, Susupe, Fina Sisu, As Lito, and As Perdido. For more information or to RSVP, contact Sablan's office at 664-8829 or email rep.sablanc@cnmileg.gov.mp. ***(PR)***

The iPhone Xs deserves the best network.
Get one month of FREE service when you purchase the iPhone Xs.
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Prices advertised reflect 2-year contract on the Freedom plan ($88). Sign a 2-year contract and purchase an iPhone Xs or Xs Max on the $50 plan or higher to avail of promotional pricing and to receive one (1) month of free service. $50 Port-in credit will be applied to account only. Standard mobile terms and conditions apply.
EXPLORE YOUR WORLD
IT&E

‘Managed WiFi Service’ now at 2 CNMI hotels

IT&E announced yesterday the launch of what it calls “Managed WiFi Services” at one hotel in Guam and two hotels in the CNMI that gives hotel guests access to fast, reliable, and secure WiFi throughout the hotel property and in their rooms.

IT&E completed its most recent installation the week of Jan. 14 and offers managed WiFi services to Guam Plaza Resort & Spa, Kanoa Resort Saipan, and Aqua Resort Club Saipan.

IT&E now offers a complete, end-to-end carrier-grade WiFi service for businesses that is managed 24/7. Through fast, strong, and reliable WiFi service, hotel guests can share their adventure and stay connected to what matters most to them.

“Today, the availability of WiFi in a hotel or business can affect a customer’s impression of their experience,” said Jim Oehlerking, CEO of IT&E. “Our Managed WiFi services meets these needs by providing our clients with a WiFi solution tailored specifically to their business. In addition, we have several new technology solutions we’re excited to launch that will offer more convenience, connectivity, and value to businesses and organizations. Our network is the widest in the Marianas and Guam and is typhoon-proven, ensuring secure and seamless connections.”

This was echoed by Mark Badal, chief information officer of IT&E. “With the demand for WiFi anywhere, anytime at an all-time high and as technology continues to constantly change, more and more businesses globally are moving away from the buy and build model. Instead, they rely on providers like IT&E to use their technical expertise to build the infrastructure and manage the day-to-day tasks of keeping the WiFi running for them. Businesses are able to reduce costs and focus resources on key priorities.”

Sudipta Basu, general manager of Guam Plaza Resort & Spa, said that, with IT&E’s managed WiFi services, they’ve enhanced the experience for their guests, who now enjoy a seamless and fast connection everywhere on the property, including its shops, eateries, banquet halls, spa, and in the 505 guest rooms.

“Good WiFi is a modern convenience travelers expect today, and we’re happy that we’re able to meet that expectation with a quality and secure solution provided by IT&E,” Basu said.

Managed WiFi is also ideal for retail settings and educational institutions.

Experts in the telecommunications industry in the region have taken notice of IT&E’s WiFi deployment in Guam and the CNMI. Badal has been invited to speak at the Wireless Broadband Alliance Asia Telecom Summit on Jan. 29 in Hong Kong.

The Wireless Broadband Alliance is an industry association formed to promote collaboration between operators in the WiFi industry. The alliance is made up of operators and technology providers, including AT&T, SK Telecom, Cisco, China Telecom, ComCast, Intel, TMobile, Google, Nokia, Microsoft, Panasonic, Huawei, and more.

Tiago Rodrigues, general manager of the Wireless Broadband Alliance, said: “It’s fantastic to see IT&E developing a WiFi/5G convergence strategy and adopt the Next Gen Hotspot (NGH) /Passpoint TM to make their WiFi network seamless, secure and interoperable. WBA is looking forward to work closely with IT&E on driving NGH/Passpoint TM Wi-Fi services adoption.”

NGH/Passpoint technology allows users to connect easily without logging in multiple times to enjoy a seamless, automatic WiFi connection.

Badal discussed WiFi and 5G deployments and convergence in Guam and the CNMI. ***(PR)***

COPE NORTH

Members of the U.S. Air Force, Japan Air Self-Defense Force, and Royal Australian Air Force build tents during Cope North 19 on Tinian in the CNMI on Feb 26, 2019. Cope North is an annual multilateral U.S. Pacific Air Forces-sponsored field training exercise focused on combat air forces large-force employment and mobility air forces humanitarian assistance and disaster relief training to enhance interoperability among U.S., Australian, and Japanese forces.

U.S. AIR FORCE/MASTER SGT. JT MAY III

Manglona: CUC needs to press CPA over expensive commodities on Rota

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Sen. Paul A. Manglona (Ind-Rota) believes that the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. pressuring the Commonwealth Ports Authority would influence commodity prices on Rota.

During the public comment portion of a CUC board meeting last Friday, Manglona raised three issues, including what CUC is doing to press CUC and help push down the high prices of commodities on Rota.

Manglona

The senator said CPA is charged with making sure they have to offload any vessel that comes into Rota and that CPA has the monopoly—the only authority—and responsibility to offload and load shipping vessels.

“I’m not hearing anything coming from CUC pressuring CPA or trying to say, ‘hey, we’re bringing in stuff and it is costing us hundreds of thousands of dollars,’” Manglona said.

The senator underscored the need to pressure CPA, saying it’s their responsibility.

“If the present company handling is irresponsible and can’t do anything, then by God, kick them out and put in another company there,” he said.

The Rota Terminal & Transfer, a stevedoring company, has an exclusive contract with CPA to handle stevedoring services at the Rota port.

Rota Terminal & Transfer reportedly cannot unload shipments because its mobile crane has been broken for over three months now. The company reportedly has been trying to fix the crane by sending parts to Guam for repair. It is also trying to ship another crane from Guam.

Manglona said if anybody has an emergency it is CPA, as it is costing the people of Rota because the commodities on the island are so expensive.

“I don’t know if you know but on Rota, if you go there to buy a softdrink or something, they tell you, ‘Sorry, we only have air flown prices [and] air flown commodities,’” he said.

That means air flown prices are “triple, quadruple” the regular price, he said. “It is so frustrating. You want to kill somebody,” Manglona said.

Currently, some commodities are brought to Rota by plane.

As for the electric power situation, Manglona said he is alarmed by the situation on Rota, with many of the generators being down. The third issue Manglona discussed with the CUC board was the Rota Resort’s assistance on the power outage problem.

CUC board chair Miranda V. Manglona interrupted the senator’s comments and reminded the senator that what they had on that day, Friday, was a special meeting and those who want to talk during public comments were afforded only three minutes.

The chairman instead invited Manglona to attend their regular meeting today, Tuesday, to discuss those issues.

The chairman assured the senator that CUC executive director Gary P. Camacho would look into his concerns and get back to him.

The senator was then allowed to wrap up his comments.

NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS MUSEUM OF HISTORY & CULTURE

PUBLIC NOTICE

Pursuant to Public Law 8-41, Governor Ralph Dlg. Torres and Lt. Governor Arnold I. Palacios, through the Board of Governors of the Northern Mariana Islands Museum of History and Culture, hereby give notice that a regular meeting of the Museum will be held on Friday, March 8, 2019 at 9:00am at the NMI Museum of History and Culture in Garapan, Saipan. All interested persons are welcome to attend. For more information, please call 664-2160 or send fax to 664-2170.

AGENDA

I. Call to Order
II. Roll Call/Ascertain Quorom
III. Adoption of Agenda
IV. Approval of Minutes
V. Reports
A. Chairman’s Report
B. Executive Directors Report
VI. Old Business
VII. New Business
A. Museum Land Assignment to MVA
B. Professional Services
VIII. Miscellaneous Matters
IX. Announcements
X. Adjournment

Chris Concepcion
Chairman, Board of Governors

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Commonwealth Judiciary
Guma’ Hustisia, Iimwal Aweewe, House of Justice
P.O. Box 502165, Saipan MP 96950
Telephone (670) 236-9770 • Facsimile (670)236-9797

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
RFP19-JUDICIARY-01

SUBMISSION DATE: March 19, 2019
TIME: 10:00 A.M.

“JANITORIAL SERVICES FOR THE CNMI JUDICIARY”

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED AT THE CASHIER WINDOW, DOOR #1, LOCATED AT THE FRONT GUMA HUSTISIA / IIMWAL AWEEWE / HOUSE OF JUSTICE, SUSUPE, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTIONS 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL PROPOSALS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/s/ ALEXANDRO C. CASTRO
CHIEF JUSTICE

/s/ JOHN T. VILLAGOMEZ
JUDICIARY PROCUREMENT OFFICER

First-ever Japanese Spring Festival draws sizeable crowd

By ERWIN ENCINARES
erwin_encinares@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Saipan Mayor David M. Apatang, front left, poses with Japanese-Northern Marianas Descent Association chair Norman Tenorio, front second left, Japanese Consul Kinji Shinoda, back left, and Marianas Visitors Authority managing director Chris Concepcion, back right, during the Japanese Spring Festival at the Paseo de Marianas last Saturday.
ERWIN ENCINARES

The first-ever Japanese Spring Festival on Saipan was a worthy successor of the usual annual Japanese Autumn Festival, which was postponed last year because of the widespread devastation of Super Typhoon Yutu on Saipan in late October 2018.

The Japanese Society of the Northern Mariana Islands, headed by chair Masato Tezuka, held the first-ever Japanese Spring Festival at the Paseo de Marianas last Saturday, showcasing the Japanese culture to CNMI residents and managing to draw the huge crowd that typically visits the autumn festival.

The one-day festival was held from 5pm to 9pm and highlighted Japanese parlor game booths and Japanese food. A small bazaar was held during the festival, along with a kendo performance and Awaodori dances.

"It's looking pretty good tonight," said Saipan Mayor David M. Apatang of the festival. "…there are a lot of people here this early and I am sure there would be a lot more people coming here this evening."

"There is plenty of food here and plenty of activities for the children," he said. "I thank the Japanese Society of Saipan for always doing this every year for our tourists and community."

The annual Japanese Autumn Festival usually holds the Katori Jingu Shrine ceremony at the Sugar King Park. However, according to a previous statement from Tezuka, the association decided not to hold that for this year because of Super Typhoon Yutu.

The autumn festival is usually held in late October.

Toys and masks were handed out to children during Saturday's festival, while Japanese food were also sold through vendors in the area.

"This festival is one of many examples of the historic ties between the Marianas and Japan, and our society is warmly welcoming all residents and visitors," said Tezuka in a previous statement.

"February is the month for welcoming the spring season and the spring season is regarded as the time when everybody starts feeling the new life coming up after the long winter season in Japan," he said, adding that the annual festival is a means to showcase the association's commitment to the community as well as to promote the Japanese culture in the CNMI.

Financial aid still available for NMC spring sem

Individuals interested in applying for Northern Marianas College's spring 2019 semester can still receive financial aid to help with tuition and other academic expenses. Prospective students are encouraged to attend NMC's upcoming information session to learn more about the federal financial aid program which uses the FAFSA.

The information session, which is open to all interested community members, will be held on Thursday, March 7, 2019, from 5:30pm to 6:30pm in NMC's Olympio T. Borja Library.

The Federal Financial Aid program is administered by the U.S. Department of Education. Through the program's various types of grants, loans, and scholarships, the Federal Financial Aid program is the largest financial aid provider in the U.S.

NMC faculty, staff, and students from the different degree programs, as well as Student Services representatives from financial aid, counseling, and admissions, will be on hand at the info session to answer questions. Additional topics that will be discussed include the different degree programs offered at the college and other college initiatives.

The college's Office of Admission and Records will be present that evening to accept and register students who are interested in registering for the upcoming spring 2019 semester.

NMC offers several degree and certificate programs, including a bachelor of science degree in education (emphasis in elementary education, early childhood education, special education, or rehabilitation and human services), bachelor of science degree in business management (emphasis in accounting); associate of arts degree in business, associate of applied science degrees in business administration (emphasis in accounting, business management, or computer applications), associate of arts in liberal arts (emphasis in education, health and physical education, and social work), associate of science in nursing, natural resources management, associate of applied science in criminal justice, and hospitality management.

For more information about the information session and/or applying to NMC, contact the Office of Admissions & Records at (670) 237-6770, emailoar@marianas.edu or visit www.marianas.edu. ***(NMC)***

Individuals interested in registering for Northern Marianas College's spring 2019 semester can still apply for financial aid.
NMC

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
Office of the Executive Director

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-19-006

KAGMAN WATERLINE AND BOOSTER STATION REHABILITATION

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the Kagman Waterline and Booster Station Rehabilitation on Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The project consists, on the installation of a new booster station to replace the existing Kumoi pump station. The work also includes and connection of a new 8-inch PVC transmission line and a new 6-inch PVC distribution line complete with all necessary valves, fittings, and appurtenances. It will also involve the rehabilitation of the existing deep well KG-131 and the reconnection of all customers onto new or existing waterlines within the project area. The Contractor shall complete the work in accordance with the plans, specifications and terms of the contract.

This project is funded by a grant from the United Sates of Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of the approval for project award from USEPA.

*CUC requires the Project to be completed in **300 calendar days** from date of award of contract.*

Prospective Bidders for this IFB must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $100.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by a Site Visit is scheduled on **February 28, 2019 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Conference Room No.15, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies along with an electronic copy of the proposal on a compact disk or USB Drive in PDF format must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked *"CUC-IFB-19-006- Kagman Waterline and Booster Station Rehabilitation,"* to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on March 21, 2019**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud.

Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement the form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.

Bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

A *Bid Guarantee* of fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The bid guarantee may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States, Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. A *Payment Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent and a *Performance Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

All questions or request for clarification regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on March 7, 2018** to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, at email manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to LCDR Travis Spaeth, CUC Water/Wastewater Senior Engineer at email travis.spaeth@cucgov.org and Christie Sablan, Procurement & Supply, Administrative Support Assistant at email christie.sablan@cucgov.org

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any imperfection in the bid proposal in the best interest of the government. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

BECQ warns of penalties for illegal dumping

A business in Chalan Kanao is inspected by the Bureau of Environment and Coastal Quality. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Another business in Chalan Kanao is inspected by the Bureau of Environment and Coastal Quality. Construction debris is seen disposed alongside the road on public easement. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Following the completion of the final sweep on Feb. 24, 2019, of the Department of Public Works and Saipan Mayor's Office crew removing typhoon-related debris from village roadsides, residents still continue to bring out typhoon waste as well as household trash alongside the roads.

On Feb. 27, 2019, DPW and the MOS announced that they are no longer going around to collect typhoon debris from villages because the operation was completed last Sunday.

BECQ advises the public and businesses that, with the debris removal operation already completed, residents and businesses should not to bring typhoon debris or household waste to the curb side anymore. That will now be considered illegal dumping.

BECQ will conduct village monitoring for any illegal dumping and will impose penalty, which may include a fine for the violation.

During BECQ's monitoring activity yesterday in Chalan Kanoa, two illegal dumpsites were investigated and the responsible parties were notified of the illegal dumping violation. They were required to clean up the sites and provide documentation that their waste was properly disposed of at the transfer station or the Marpi landfill.

According to BECQ, with the debris removal operation conducted by the DPW and MOS already completed, residents should take responsibility to keep their village area clean and be responsible to dispose of their trash properly. ***(PR)***

UOG conference to focus on Oceania issues

The 40th CLASS Annual Research Conference themed "I Tano, I Tasi, yan I Taotao Siha: Boundaries, Balance, and Behaviors" will take place on Friday, March 8, from 8:30am to 4pm in the Humanities & Social Sciences Building on the campus of the University of Guam.

The Annual Research Conference is organized by UOG's College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences as a forum for intellectual engagement and discussions on issues related and unique to Oceania, a global resource endowed with significant ecological and cultural diversity.

It is a multidisciplinary research conference platform for local, regional, and global scholars, scientists, visual and theatrical artists, and students to share their research and experiences. The conference will include presentations of academic papers, illustrated talks, interactive panels and demonstrations, performances, and informative poster sessions.

The theme is meant to generate insightful conversations and novel ideas that evaluate, redefine, and promote the collaborative projects in diverse fields in the Pacific region. Practitioners and scholars are encouraged to interrogate how those issues manifest in the Pacific as well as examine the changing role of Oceania as it grapples with the social forces of globalization. ***(PR)***

Congratulations to MCS STEM Fair winners

Mount Carmel School congratulates all the young scientists and inventors who are winners of this year's MCS STEM Fair:

Level 1 (1st & 2nd Grades)

1st Place: Cali Jade Cabrera, "The Solar System is Awesome"

2nd Place: Caleb Aldan, "How to make crystals with borax"

3rd Place: Jaedon Regalado, "Road Trip"

Level 2 (3rd–5th Grades)

1st Place: Leonard Regalado, "ElectroMagnet crane"

2nd Place: Zion Cabrera, "The forces of Typhoon Yutu"

3rd Place: William Cano, "How to build a hydrolic arm"

Level 3 (6th–8th Grades)

1st Place: Kyla Cabrera, "Is there enough? Which drink contains the most electrolytes"

2nd Place: Latisha Anne De Jesus, "Pest Be Gone"

3rd Place: Kayani Peter and Sienna Muna, "The DNAbler"

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Participants in Mount Carmel School's STEM Fair are presented certificates during a ceremony at the Mount Carmel Cathedral.

Level 4 (9th–12th Grades)

1st Place: Mikee Mendoza and Sinahi Cepeda, "How Accurate is 99.9%"

2nd Place: Casey Pathil, Emmeline Lee, and HaeSu Yeo, "Music+Genes+Math"

3rd Place: Maria Ayuyu and Vince Salvador, "Safer Alternative"

Level 5 (9th–12th Grades)

1st Place: William Deleon Guerrero, "Lost Beacon"

Judges: Joseph Pangelinan, Arnold Route, Jose Tudela (representative of Adrian Atalig), Roberta Guerrero, Jolly Ann Cruz, Jolleen Taimanao, Jonathan Sanchez, Valerie S. Hofschneider, Keanna Villagomez, Vincent Aldan, Kim Calage, Yvonne Cabrera, Alfred Palattao, John Blanco, and Birhen Martinez.

Fair coordinators: Eva Villar, Luz Baldazo, and their entire team. ***(PR)***

Flashback

A LOOK BACK AT PAST YEARS' HEADLINES

March 5, 2001

Fast-tracked review of tax amnesty bill eyed

The House of Representatives on Friday transferred to the Committee on Ways and Means the review of a proposed measure that would give delinquent taxpayers a 90-day relief on the filing of their derelict returns. House Bill 12-345 gives remiss taxpayers the opportunity to pay their liabilities to the CNMI government without penalties within 90 days. The bill's proponent, Floor Leader Oscar M. Babauta, said transfer of the proposed measure's review from the Judiciary and Governmental Operations to the Committee on Ways and Means would facilitate its prompt passage. Mr. Babauta said the proposed measure has bright potentials to refill the government's depleting coffers because it would encourage delinquent taxpayers to come out and settle their overdue obligations to the Commonwealth.

'Most NMI youths tried smoking'

Initial result of the tobacco survey now being conducted by the Department of Public Health disclosed that an estimated 8 percent of Commonwealth youth have tried cigarette smoking. This was revealed by DPH Tobacco Master Settlement Advisory Committee member Malinda Matson during the American Cancer Society's 2001 Relay Rally held at the Pacific Island Club Thursday night. Matson said the figure is more reason why the health department should proceed with its planned two-year tobacco education forum which will be funded under the Legacy Foundation Grant. The Legacy Foundation Grant receives certain percentage of the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement that can be used for education program and campaign against cigarette smoking.

March 5, 2005

Govt mulls reduced rebates, others

If user fee collection declines by over 20 percent this fiscal year, the government may resort to cutting the rebates percentage and suspend the use of certain funds being tapped for some activities. Finance Secretary Fermin Atalig said Friday that these are some options that the government is looking at in view of the ongoing downsizing in the garment industry. The government receives an average of $30 million in user fees every year. "There are other areas we are looking at, like maybe we can ask the Legislature to cut the rebate percentage. That's an option. Likewise, the earmarking can be suspended so that all funds will be diverted to the general fund," said the Finance secretary.

Hirsh: CNMI a place of compassion

American Red Cross NMI Chapter director John Hirsh lauded the people of the CNMI for their generosity and gift of giving during the general membership meeting of the Saipan Chamber of Commerce last Wednesday at the Pacific Islands Club. Hirsh, who spoke at the Chamber meetings as the entire nation commemorates American Red Cross month, said compassion is deeply rooted in the psyche of the people of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. He further said that in the American Red Cross' 26-year existence in the Marianas, he has always witnessed, first hand, the compassion and dedication of its people to humanitarian causes.

March 5, 2006

'Spare NMC from budget cuts'

The House minority bloc has warned the administration of the possibility that budget cuts may result in closure of the Northern Marianas College's Rota and Tinian campuses. The minority members, led by Rep. Arnold I. Palacios, said this in a resolution asking the governor to spare the college from the budget cuts being implemented against all government agencies. According to the resolution, the administration's budget reduction analysis proposes to cut NMC's FY 2006 continuing resolution budget level of $8 million by 20- to 48- percent. Antonio Muna, the governor's special assistant for management and budget, said Friday that all agencies were facing an 18.78-percent budget reduction across the board, as a result of the decreased revenue projection and the state of emergency at the Commonwealth Utilities Corp.

DEQ brigade collects 800 lbs of trash, finds illegal dumpsite

The Division of Environmental Quality's monthly cleanup brigade collected an estimated 800 lbs of trash and discovered an illegal dumpsite at the beach near the Coral Ocean Point last Saturday. After scouring the beachside for almost two hours, 60 volunteers, mostly students from Cha Cha Oceanview Junior High School, gathered all the trash and put them into a DEQ truck. The cleanup brigade also found an illegal dumpsite that was recently opened at the east side portion of the beach. DEQ spokesperson Reina Camacho told the Saipan Tribune after the cleanup operation that the collected trash would be brought to the dump transport station so they could sort the recyclable items. Camacho said DEQ would also investigate to determine who is or are responsible for the illegal dumpsite.

Make-A-Wish fetes previous 'wish' recipients

By ERWIN ENCINARES
erwin_encinares@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Make-A-Wish Foundation-Guam and the CNMI Chapter honored past "wish" families who already have had their wishes granted at the annual "Black Ties & Zories" Wish Night last Friday, March 1, at the Hyatt Regency Saipan's ballroom.

Foundation board member Kanae Quinn noted that about 185 tickets costing $100 each were sold for the event, which was also intended as a fundraiser. That makes at least $18,500 in ticket sales alone for the foundation, not including the silent auction and other monetary and in-kind donations.

The fundraising event, according to Quinn, is normally a November event. However, since Super Typhoon Yutu devastated Saipan and Tinian last October, the foundation moved the event to last Friday evening.

As stated in the fundraiser's name, the dress code was a mix of both formal clothes and zories. That means guests attended the event dressed in their best clothes while wearing decorated flip-flops.

Last Friday, the Make-A-Wish Foundation-Guam and the CNMI Chapter honored 2009 Wish recipient Juan Blanco, whose wish was to meet former U.S. president Barrack Obama.

"The experience was pretty good—Obama was a kind and humble man. Overall, the White House was a beautiful, big house. It was really nice," he said of the experience.

Another beneficiary, Chloe Bernal, 2016 Wish recipient, was also honored at the fundraising event. She also happened to win the best zories award.

In explaining the functions of the foundation, Quinn said, "We fulfill the wishes of children with critical illnesses. …The wishes can be going somewhere, getting a shopping spree, having something, etc."

She said that the foundation just granted such a wish last Sunday but the family of the wish recipient chose to keep the event confidential.

"When families have wishes that are granted, they can either be publicized or kept confidential," she said.

"For the Guam and CNMI as a chapter, we generally do wishes once or twice a month," she added.

Live performances rocked the Hyatt Regency Saipan ballroom during the Make-a-Wish Guam and NMI Chapter fundraising event last Friday evening.
ERWIN ENCINARES

ERWIN ENCINARES
Chloe Bernal, front, won the best zories award during the fundraiser.

ERWIN ENCINARES
Make-a-Wish Guam and CNMI Chapter executive director Eric Tydingco shares a few words.

ERWIN ENCINARES
About 185 tickets were sold for the fundraiser.

ERWIN ENCINARES
Wish recipient Chloe Bernal's mother Cindy Bernal says a few words.

ERWIN ENCINARES
Wish recipient Juan Sablan goes onstage with Make-a-Wish Guam and CNMI executive director Eric Tydingco.

ERWIN ENCINARES
Rep. Tina Sablan (ind-Saipan) retrieves her raffle prize.

ERWIN ENCINARES
Another raffle prize winner retrieves a prize.

ERWIN ENCINARES
Rep. Ivan A. Blanco (R-Saipan) and McDonald's Saipan owner and operator Marcia Ayuyu share a table at the fundraiser.

ERWIN ENCINARES
Jay Santos of Make-a-Wish Guam and CNMI Chapter announces the winners of the silent auction.

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
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EDITORIAL

Yes, the military draft should include women. It's obvious.

Houston-based U.S. District Judge Gray H. Miller's ruling that it is unconstitutional to have a military draft that applies only to men can be seen as trivial or irrelevant, given that the draft ended 46 years ago, and few people, rightly, are clamoring for its return. Relying on volunteers has mostly worked very well for the military.

Nevertheless, Miller's ruling matters—and is grounded in common sense—because federal law still requires men to register with the Selective Service System when they turn 18. In 1981, when the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the male-only draft, justices bought the rationale that women were not suited for combat. But in 2013, as Miller noted, the Pentagon dropped its ban on women in combat, saying that women who met gender-neutral physical health standards could serve along men on the front lines.

Even if the Pentagon hadn't made that decision, having a draft for only men would still have seemed dubious, given that the great majority of military jobs now require technical or other cognitive skills. As the judge wrote, "In the nearly four decades since (the U.S. Supreme Court upheld a men-only draft), women's opportunities in the military have expanded dramatically."

Change was likely coming in any event. The National Commission on Military, National and Public Service—established by Congress in 2017—was expected to call for ending the male-only draft in a report that's due next year. So why wait? Since Miller's ruling isn't binding on the Pentagon, military leaders and the Trump administration should consider changing the draft immediately.

The male-only rule is an anachronism.

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'Nuanced understanding of the CNMI is needed'

Editor's Note: The following is the text of the written testimony of Gov. Ralph DLG Torres before the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources on Feb. 26, 2019

By RALPH DLG TORRES
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Ralph DLG Torres is the governor of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

On behalf of the people of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, I want to thank [committee] chairman [Lisa] Murkowski, ranking member [Joe] Manchin and the distinguished members of this committee for recognizing the need of this important conversation about the priorities of the U.S. territories and allowing for this submitted testimony for the record.

Many of the issues facing the territories today are unique to us. We all fight against issues of geography. Limited land mass, natural resource scarcity, distance from the United States, and import reliance are key among these issues. We face labor challenges, where our locations, economies, outward migration and population sizes are not suitable to build resiliency or strength in a globally competitive market. But I believe most important among these issues is our continual struggle to gain the federal government's understanding of the complexity of achieving substantial progress for the people living in the territories.

I thank Chairman Murkowski for her outstanding effort on behalf of the U.S. Senate for organizing and encouraging participation in congressional delegation visits to the CNMI. Many of the challenges we face are difficult to comprehend if one does not travel the 8,000 miles across the Pacific Ocean to experience it for themselves.

Efforts such as these are critical when federal laws have such over-sized effects on the fragile state of the U.S. territories. Territories, while not having full representation in our House of Representatives, no direct representation in the US Senate, and are unable to cast a vote for President, suffer the harshest side effects of the unintended consequences of federal actions that do not account for the vulnerability our communities.

The topic of today's hearing is on the state of our territories and the priorities for my administration going forward. While I have many goals for the next four years in office, I must be honest in recognizing the greatest obstacles toward improving the lives of the people of the CNMI are the actions of the federal government.

One of my most urgent priorities is the rebuilding of safe and resilient homes that were destroyed by Super Typhoon Yutu last October. Super Typhoon Yutu was the worst typhoon to hit U.S. soil since 1935. According to damage assessments performed by the American Red Cross 5,910 homes were destroyed or suffered major damage after the Oct. 25 disaster of last year. Nearly four out of every 10 homes on island were impacted by this disaster at a time where available housing stocks were already at capacity. These homes will require rebuilding and new construction to maintain the safety and security of their families, yet the availability of construction labor to do this necessary and critical work has been limited by federal actions preventing construction companies' access to the necessary foreign labor through the H2-B program.

In this situation, the prohibition of CW-1 positions for new construction workers combined with the federal government's position that the majority of construction contractors are ineligible to source their labor through the H2-B process, will result in fewer safe and sanitary homes in the CNMI. What should be of great concern is the wide-ranging implications that will follow for socio-economic mobility, education, and health throughout the islands. Down the road this will require even greater federal resources to support these families.

In my time, I had to lead my islands through two once-in-a-generation natural disasters. It is not a question of if another disaster devastates our islands, but when. This *will* happen again, and without the presence of construction labor to rebuild resilient homes, the cost to the federal government will be greater and greater in the years to come.

Already the cost of policies limiting access to construction labor has increased the cost to the federal government for disaster recovery.

After Typhoon Yutu, FEMA and the Department of Defense recognized the challenges of performing their work for the American citizens living in the CNMI by seeking out new and innovative solutions that conformed to our unique circumstances.

One week after the disaster, DoD and FEMA officials an-

Continued on Next Page

From Page 10

nounced a program in collaboration with the CNMI called the Temporary Emergency Tent and Roofing Installation Support or TETRIS program. Under TETRIS, the Joint Task Force West, saw more than 1,000 uniformed service members mobilized in support of the relief efforts. Seabees from the 30th Naval Construction Regiment and the 254th Red Horse Squadron were activated in the hundreds to support the installation of tents and emergency roof repairs for the thousands of affected homes because local manpower and resources could not scale in the capacity necessary to prevent further loss of life, mitigate suffering and reduce the impact of the disaster.

If it were not for the 200 men and women of the Seabees and the Red Horses, 184 homes in Tinian would be without roofs over their heads because there are no available construction workers there.

Further FEMA recently approved a Permanent Housing Construction Program that will source and provide labor and materials to reconstruct the homes of eligible households. Currently there are 9,400 applicants for this program and FEMA is in the process of looking toward bringing in labor from outside the CNMI because of the lack of local manpower. The homes that are selected will be fortunate. Now as FEMA and SBA resources have been released to the residents of the CNMI, the thousands of homes remaining will not be able to afford the cost of transporting labor nor will there be available contractors to help rebuild their lives.

The Department of Defense and FEMA have experienced the challenges we live with daily when it comes to labor and have created new pathways to work around them. I ask that you consider their experience and join it with the experiences of our private sector partners who are struggling to grow our economy and hire our people in the face of the restrictions imposed on us by Washington, D.C.

Many in this committee are familiar with the CNMI's labor struggles. I thank this committee and Chairman Murkowski for your tireless efforts toward the enactment of Northern Mariana Islands U.S. Workforce Act that recognized the CNMI's labor shortages and economic needs and provided additional time and resources for our community to grow. This was an important effort for the CNMI, and the process shows that the territories require specific solutions to their unique issues, but the conversation must continue.

The CNMI, more than ever, needs the federal government's recognition that there is a choice between the progress of the thousands of U.S. citizens in the territories and the all-encompassing application of national laws and regulations, and that in many instances these two choices are mutually exclusive.

According to the most recent 2010 Census information, 52 percent of individuals in the CNMI lived beneath the federal poverty line, an increase of 6 percentage points from 10 years prior. Between these two surveys, federal actions to apply the federal minimum wage and federalize the immigration system were enacted. The prolonged economic depression that highlights that period was as a result of the elimination of the controversial garment industry, a dramatic contraction of our visitor arrivals, and the institution of strict government austerity as a result of reduced government revenues—three main pillars of the CNMI's economy.

Only recently has this trend begun to level off. Our economy has just recently rebounded to pre-depression levels but is just 5 percent the size of the smallest U.S. state's economy. Our U.S. labor force is steadily increasing beyond the 50 percent mark in 2017, increasing 11 percent from 2016, thanks in part to higher wages that are now on average above $12 per hour. Yet, the CNMI lags far behind the United States.

The median income of individuals in the CNMI is $18,000 lower than the national average. Rates of those without health insurance is 37 percentage points higher in the CNMI than the nation and the poverty rate is 39 percentage points higher than the national average.

It is a priority to reduce instances of poverty and increase wages and opportunities for my people, but the resources the CNMI has available to it to grow its economy to meet the needs of the population are slim. The CNMI is not rich in extractive resources, has limited fisheries stock for commercial fishing, and does not have enough land mass for competitive agriculture industries. The islands are too isolated to participate in global supply chains, we suffer from inflated costs for the importation of goods and materials, have lost our sole manufacturing sector, and experience exorbitant utilities costs due to a reliance on imported diesel.

The sole remaining economic driver in the CNMI is tourism but even in that field we are at a competitive disadvantage. The cost of air service to the CNMI is undercut by lower cost alternatives in the region. Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand and Indonesia are our direct competitors and our use of the U.S. dollar increases costs for on-island expenses when tourists arrive. The limited economic resources because of these issues further reduces destination enhancement efforts and the competitiveness of the islands. The CNMI's tourism market is solely reliant on three source countries—Japan, Korea and China—to provide the revenue for our small economy.

The travel time and distance from the U.S. mainland results in limited investment from American companies and a reliance on foreign investment to maintain economic viability.

And natural disasters represent a clear and devastating risk to economic activity and government resources.

Much of these issues are caused by the problem of scale. Too few consumers and investors are present in the CNMI to reduce cost and create a virtuous cycle toward greater levels of development and resiliency. These challenges are not unique to the CNMI around the world but are unique within the United States.

A little more than a half century ago, the Northern Mariana Islands was still war-torn agricultural community with no economy to speak of - isolated geographically and politically from the world.

And despite progress since joining the United States 40 years ago, the CNMI is still in many ways a developing country in all aspects except its relationship to the United States. Where the American government recognizes the economic challenges of developing states and supports a growth trajectory through stages of development, the CNMI is forced to support the needs of its people and attempt growth while under restrictions and rules developed through centuries of American economic history, all with a small fraction of the resources of the U.S. mainland.

We are also required to strive to accomplish this possibly impossible task with fewer federal resources to support our population. The Medicaid program operates differently in the territories capping the total amount of Medicaid dollars given to the population and has a statutorily set federal match as opposed to the formula applied in the states. Employment services such as the Wagner-Peysor Act are not available to the CNMI because we do not fall under the statutory definition of "state." Our infrastructure development fund, created to only support the economic development of the CNMI in 1978 has remained at $27.72 million dollars for 41 years and that limited pot is now shared between Guam, American Samoa, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Our sons and daughters fight alongside the sons and daughters of your states in our nation's military but receive less care and support as veterans solely because they live in the CNMI.

Whether it is possible to build a prosperous community when contending with such unmistakable limitations is still an open question.

Still, it is essential that we leverage what resources are available to us to build a stronger community. But federal government actions, such as the restrictions on labor access, threats to our essential tourism markets, and the growing competitiveness of the global economy is severely limiting our potential to succeed.

I make mention of these challenges to highlight a central point: The United States needs to recognize the unique challenges of its territories and work toward a new approach when dealing with territorial issues.

For the CNMI, immigration issues are front and center of our development. We cannot build enough scale within our community to lower the costs of living, increases the efficiency of government services, or support those in greatest need – our retirees, our students, our disabled and our mentally ill, without a sufficiently robust economy, and this economy cannot exist without workers and tourists.

The reality that the inflexible application of federal immigration law will be one of the greatest obstacles toward bettering the lives of the people of the CNMI.

I ask that we reconsider the prohibition of construction labor under the Northern Mariana Islands U.S. Workforce Act to allow for the CNMI to determine the allowable cap on construction permits available to both safeguard the scarcity of these permits and allow for the necessary construction of our islands. And I ask that Congress replicate the program allowed for our neighboring island of Guam and their military buildup program and permit the entry of construction workers under the H2-B program to work with general contractors and construction companies as we continue the long rebuilding process ahead of us.

We must think of the practical application of requiring half of the current labor force to return to their countries of origin every two years while the economy sits and waits for the months of renewal processing.

And we should closely monitor the implementation of these new provisions, so they do not undermine the economy and U.S. jobs we worked so hard to build and protect.

In order to have a chance at creating a viable economy, we must have a willingness to cooperate toward the development of a system that prevents the errors of the past from reoccurring but do so in a way that respects the special relationship the CNMI has with the United States.

Our people exercised their right to self-determination 40 years ago and voted to become Americans. Many of those who voted for our entry into the American family are still alive today and supported our status because of the promise that partnership with the United States would offer the standards of living equal to that of the larger American community.

In the process of joining the United States we relinquished critical areas of our autonomy and entrusted it with this body, under the hope that the members that fill its halls and chambers understand and care for the people of our islands.

The relationship since that point has had its successes and its conflicts and there is still much work to do in building a strong and viable U.S. community in the Western Pacific.

I ask that this work begin with a belief that we are not a problem to be solved. Our problems require understanding of the nuanced and complex path that created them.

I ask that you allow us the opportunity to scale the development path. Recognize that we have only recently begun to step foot on this ladder, and that what works for California, Nevada, Idaho, or New Hampshire may not work for a community with such pronounced challenges like the CNMI.

And most importantly, I ask that the federal government treat us as partners in the goal of economic growth in the CNMI. We must acknowledge that the federal government has an incredible amount of power to influence the lives of the people living there. Using that power responsibly for the betterment of our people requires mutual respect in recognizing where failures exist and collaborating to address the underlying issues.

I am proud to say that we have made great progress in the CNMI over the course of the last years. We have enhanced public services, launched our first ever public transportation system, and increased social service benefits to our people. We have created our first substance abuse rehabilitation center to fight back against the spread of Crystal Methamphetamine addiction, we have more local funding appropriated for our public schools, maintained low public debt, decreased unemployment, and increased average wages. Our streets are safer, and our people have more opportunities to thrive and our islands' sole hospital has new equipment and resources to save lives. These successes are due to the growth in our economy, but this success hinges whether the federal government will allow this growth to continue or not.

We have made progress on issues discussed in this committee over the course of my administration. I am pleased to say that the CNMI continues to make progress to ease concerns over money laundering as the Commonwealth Casino Commission and the newly established House and Senate Committees on Gaming moves forward on stronger legislation to protect our people from the harms associated with the gaming industry and my administration has worked closely with FINCEN to ensure our regulations are created with the primary goal of ensuring compliance with federal anti-money laundering and bank secrecy laws.

Additionally, our new CNMI Department of Labor has created the strongest relationship the CNMI has ever had with officials of the U.S. Department of Labor and is actively pursuing all labor violation claims to ensure all workers are given an equal opportunity for success.

My priorities on infrastructure development, destination enhancement, upgrades to our education system, diversification of our economy, reduction in substance abuse and non-communicable diseases, reduction to instances of poverty, the strong and resilient recovery from Typhoon Yutu, and the improvements to core government services will be meaningless without the willingness of the federal government to understand our issues and address constraints within federal policy that hinder growth.

As a key actor toward the accomplishment of these priorities, I look forward to speaking with you further about the obstacles we are facing with our immigration system, our continued access to tourism markets, and the complications of building an economy in a remote U.S. territory.

Together I know we can work toward redefining our relationship with the federal government and carve a path forward that maintains the partnership our forbearers envisioned 40 years ago.

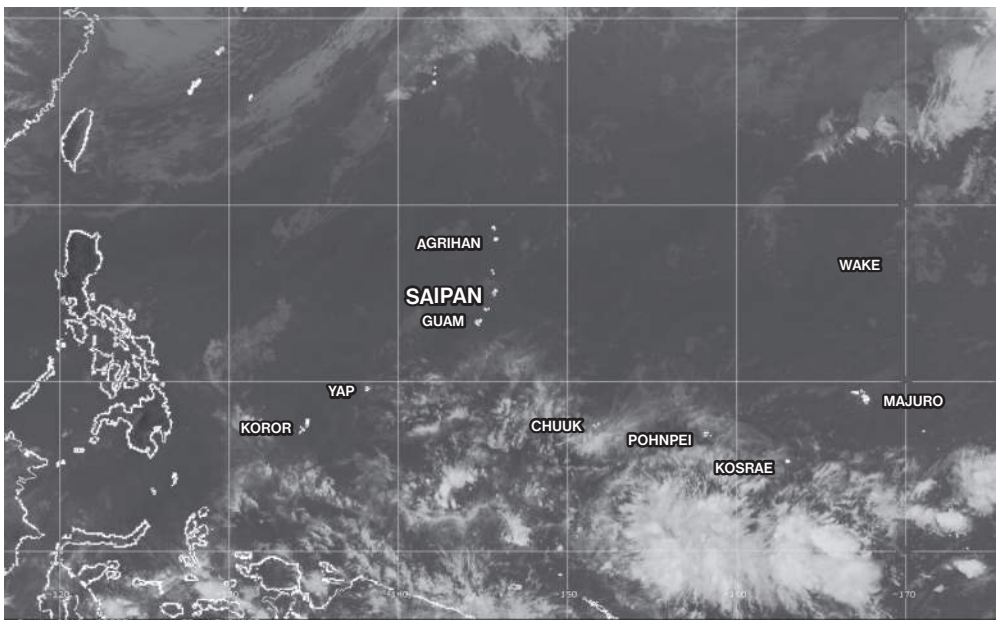
Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with this testimony. I sincerely appreciate the efforts being made to increase communication with the US territories and am committed to continuing these important discussions in the months and years ahead.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Partly cloudy with isolated light showers. East winds 10 to 20 mph.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 20 mph.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated light showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated light showers.
87° 76°	87° 76°	88° 77°	87° 77°	87° 77°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 7:23 AM, MONDAY, MARCH 4, 2019
Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Andersen Air Force Base Doppler weather radar shows isolated showers moving through the Marianas waters, mainly organized along a line in the Rota channel. The VAD wind profile indicates east winds of 12 to 16 knots just off the ground, which increase to increase to 15 to 19 knots through the lowest 8 thousand feet of the air. The buoys reveal combined seas of 4 to 6 feet composed of trade-wind swell and wind waves, both from the east.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA	▲ ▼ °F	
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy	84° / 76°
Palau	Mostly Cloudy	85° / 76°
Yap	Partly Cloudy	86° / 79°
Chuuk	Thunderstorms	85° / 79°
Pohnpei	Thunderstorms	84° / 79°
Kosrae	Thunderstorms	84° / 79°
Majuro	Showers	84° / 79°

AROUND THE GLOBE	▲ ▼ °F	
Auckland	Mostly Sunny	72° / 63°
Beijing	Sunny	55° / 27°
Hong Kong	Thunderstorms	73° / 63°
Honolulu	Cloudy	78° / 67°
London	Showers	54° / 48°
Los Angeles	Showers	67° / 56°
Manila	Mostly Sunny	91° / 75°
Melbourne	Partly Cloudy	63° / 52°
Miami	Partly Cloudy	83° / 59°
New York	Mostly Sunny	31° / 18°
Osaka	Showers	61° / 48°
Paris	Showers	57° / 46°
Busan	Showers	54° / 43°
Rome	Mostly Cloudy	63° / 45°
Salem	Cloudy	56° / 34°
San Francisco	Rain	54° / 53°
Seoul	Partly Cloudy	54° / 34°
Tokyo	Rain	55° / 48°
Washington, DC	Mostly Sunny	40° / 21°

NMI CRIME STOPPERS
Anonymous tips can now be submitted through the following:
- Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
- *11 on any IT&E cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.net

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
1:17 AM	HIGH TIDE	-0.05
7:57 AM	LOW TIDE	1.79
1:42 PM	HIGH TIDE	0.93
6:49 PM	LOW TIDE	1.81

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:32 AM	6:25 PM
Wednesday	6:31 AM	6:25 PM
Thursday	6:30 AM	6:25 PM
Friday	6:30 AM	6:25 PM
Saturday	6:29 AM	6:26 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	5:33 AM	5:20 PM	-
Wednesday	6:13 AM	6:08 PM	-
Thursday	6:52 AM	6:56 PM	-
Friday	7:29 AM	7:43 PM	-
Saturday	8:07 AM	8:31 PM	-

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 21, 2019

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA117	9:15am	9:55am	Daily
UA105	6:25pm	7:05pm	2, 4

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

7C3451	3:15am	6:30am	Daily

SAIPAN-SEOUL (ICN)

OZ626	2:10am	6:00am	1
OZ626	2:50am	6:40am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
7C3403	4:35am	8:25am	Daily
7C3401	4:30pm	8:25pm	Daily

SAIPAN-SHANGHAI (PVG)

3U8648	6:10am	8:50am	1, 4, 5, 7

SAIPAN-HANGZHOU (HGH)

JD396	7:30am	11:00am	1
JD396	4:50pm	7:55pm	4

SAIPAN-GUANGZHOU (CAN)

3U8646	4:30am	7:55am	2, 6

SAIPAN-BEIJING (PEK)

MU764	1:30am	6:35am	3, 5, 7

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

UA117/183	9:15am	9:40pm	2, 5 via GUM
UA117/183	9:15am	9:50pm	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
UA117/193	9:15am	11:50pm	2, 5 via GUM-ROR
UA105/183	4:45pm	9:40pm	2 via GUM
UA105/183	4:45pm	9:50pm	4 via GUM

SAIPAN-HONG KONG (HKG)

HX077	1:50am	5:15am	1, 4
OZ626/721	2:10am	11:50am	1 via ICN
OZ626/721	2:50am	11:50am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
UO43	5:45am	8:40am	1, 3, 5, 7
UA117/159	9:15am	11:00pm	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via GUM
UA105/159	4:45pm	11:00pm	2, 4 via GUM

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	7:30am	8:11am	Daily
UA104	4:50pm	5:31pm	2, 4

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

7C3452	9:35pm	2:00am+1	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
7C3452	10:05pm	2:00am+1	1

SEOUL (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3402	10:10am	3:30pm	Daily
OZ625	7:40pm	1:00am+1	7
OZ625	8:20pm	1:40am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
7C3404	10:10pm	3:40am+1	Daily

SHANGHAI (PVG)-SAIPAN

3U8647	10:20pm	4:50am+1	3, 4, 6, 7

HANGZHOU (HGH)-SAIPAN

JD395	8:05am	3:30pm	4
JD395	9:35pm	5:00am+1	7

GUANGZHOU (CAN)-SAIPAN

3U8645	7:55pm	2:40am+1	1, 5

BEIJING (PEK)-SAIPAN

MU763	4:40pm	12:30am+1	2, 4, 6

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA182/174	12:40am	8:11am+1	3, 6 via GUM
PR110/UA174	10:05pm	8:11am+1	Daily via GUM
UA192/174	10:30pm	8:11am+1	2, 5 via GUM-ROR
UA184/174	10:55pm	8:11am+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM

HONG KONG (HKG)-SAIPAN

OZ722/625	1:15pm	1:00am+1	7 via ICN
OZ722/625	1:15pm	1:40am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
HX076	5:15pm	12:15am+1	3, 7
UO42	6:50pm	1:45am+1	7
UO42	9:30pm	4:25am+1	2, 4, 6
UA116/174	11:45pm	8:11am+1	2, 4 via GUM
UA116/174	11:55pm	8:11am+1	1, 3, 5, 6 via GUM

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); 3U Sichuan Airlines, 7C Jeju Air, DL Delta Airlines, JD Beijing Capital, UO HK Express, HX HongKong Airlines, MU China Eastern, OZ Asiana Airlines, TW t'way Air, UA United Airlines, PR PAL Express; ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The* Saipan Tribune *is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1301	7:30AM	8:00AM	Daily
1302	11:30AM	12:00PM	Daily
1303	4:00PM	4:30PM	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3101	8:15AM	8:45AM	Daily
3102	1:45PM	2:15PM	Daily
3103	4:45PM	5:15PM	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3401	12:15PM	12:45PM	Daily

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
4301	1:00PM	1:30PM	Daily

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1201	7:00AM	7:15AM	Daily
1202	8:00AM	8:15AM	Daily
1203	9:00AM	9:15AM	Daily
1204	10:00AM	10:15AM	Daily
1205	11:00AM	11:15AM	Daily
1206	12:00PM	12:15PM	Daily
1207	1:00PM	1:15PM	Daily
1208	2:00PM	2:15PM	Daily
1209	3:00PM	3:15PM	Daily
1210	4:00PM	4:15PM	Daily
1211	5:00PM	5:15PM	Daily
1212	6:00PM	6:15PM	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
2102	7:30AM	7:45AM	Daily
2103	8:30AM	8:45AM	Daily
2104	9:30AM	9:45AM	Daily
2105	10:30AM	10:45AM	Daily
2106	11:30AM	11:45AM	Daily
2107	12:30PM	12:45PM	Daily
2108	1:30PM	1:45PM	Daily
2109	2:30PM	2:45PM	Daily
2110	3:30PM	3:45PM	Daily
2111	4:30PM	4:45PM	Daily
2112	5:30PM	5:45PM	Daily
2113	6:30PM	6:45PM	Daily

Business

UK trade official sees hope in Brexit hard-liners' proposals

LONDON (AP)—Britain's international trade secretary on Sunday welcomed proposals drawn up by hard-line Brexit supporters that outline what it would take for them to support Prime Minister Theresa May's deal with the European Union.

Liam Fox told the BBC that the European Research Group's proposals, published in the Sunday Times, could be seen as an attempt to find common ground on the sticky issue of the Irish border.

"I hope it's a genuine attempt, and I think it is, to try to map out ground where we can have common territory" before the House of Commons votes on the deal next week, Fox told the BBC.

Parliament rejected May's deal in January, largely because of concerns about the so-called backstop, which is designed to prevent the need for physical border checks along the Irish border if negotiators fail to agree on a free-trade deal. Lawmakers on all sides opposed the provisions because they could leave Britain tied to the EU indefinitely.

In its published proposal, the European Research Group demanded a "clear and unconditional route out of the backstop."

While the group didn't detail how its goal should be achieved, it said the change must be contained in a treaty-level clause that "unambiguously overrides" the text of the current agreement.

The flag of the European Union and the British national flag are flown on poles during a demonstration by supporters outside the Palace of Westminster in London, Wednesday, Feb. 27, 2019. AP

Graham Brady, chairman of the influential 1922 Committee of Conservative lawmakers, expressed optimism that a breakthrough was close. Brady suggested he could back May's deal if the right compromise on the backstop emerged.

"The whole country is tired of vacillation and delay," he wrote in the Mail on Sunday, adding that "this is not a time to make the best the enemy of the good."

"We know what is needed to shift the logjam," he said. "The attorney general needs to give a legally binding guarantee that the backstop is temporary."

Meanwhile, the opposition Labour Party remained divided over its next moves after party leader Jeremy Corbyn last week supported calls for a second Brexit referendum.

John McDonnell, Labour's spokesman on treasury issues, signaled Sunday that the party was likely to force its lawmakers to back legislation on a new referendum. But former minister Caroline Flint told Sky News that up to 70 of Labour's lawmakers would oppose any such move.

Corbyn had an egg thrown at him Sunday during a visit to a north London mosque. The Labour leader was not hurt and met with constituents at the Finsbury Park Mosque and Muslim Welfare House as planned, according to Britain's Press Association.

A 41-year-old man was "quickly detained" and arrested on suspicion of assault, the Metropolitan Police department said.

US-built capsule with a dummy aboard docks at space station

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP)—A sleek new American-built capsule with just a test dummy aboard docked smoothly with the International Space Station on Sunday, bringing the U.S. a big step closer to getting back in the business of launching astronauts.

The white, bullet-shaped Dragon capsule, developed by Elon Musk's SpaceX company under contract to NASA, closed in on the orbiting station nearly 260 miles above the Pacific Ocean and, flying autonomously, linked up on its own, without the help of the robotic arm normally used to guide spacecraft into position.

Dragon's arrival marked the first time in eight years that an American-made spacecraft capable of carrying humans has flown to the space station.

If this six-day test flight goes well, a Dragon capsule could take two NASA astronauts to the orbiting outpost this summer.

"A new generation of space flight starts now with the arrival of @SpaceX's Crew Dragon to the @Space_Station," NASA Administrator Jim Bridenstine tweeted. "Congratulations to all for this historic achievement getting us closer to flying American Astronauts on American rockets."

Ever since NASA retired the space shuttle in 2011, the U.S. has been hitching rides to and from the space station aboard Russian Soyuz spacecraft. In the meantime, NASA is paying two companies — SpaceX and Boeing — to build and operate America's next generation of rocket ships.

SpaceX's 27-foot-long (8-meter-long) capsule rocketed into orbit early Saturday from NASA's Kennedy Space Center with a mannequin strapped into one of its four seats in a dashing, white-and-black, form-fitting SpaceX spacesuit. The test dummy was nicknamed Ripley after the main character in the "Alien" movies.

Ripley and the capsule are rigged with sensors to measure noise, vibration and stresses and monitor the life-support, propulsion and other critical systems.

As the capsule closed in on the space station, its nose cap was wide open like a dragon's mouth to expose the docking mechanism. In a docking with a crew aboard, the capsule would likewise operate autonomously, though the astronauts might push a button or two and would be able to intervene if necessary.

The three U.S., Canadian and Russian crew members aboard the space station watched the rendezvous via TV cameras. Within hours, the capsule's hatch swung open and the three astronauts floated inside to remove supplies and take air samples, wearing oxygen masks and hoods until they got the all-clear.

Canadian astronaut David Saint-Jacques pronounced the docking flawless and called it "a beautiful thing to see."

"Welcome to the new era in spaceflight," he said.

Dragon will remain at the space station until Friday, when it will undock for an old-school, "Right Stuff"-style splashdown in the Atlantic, a few hundred miles off Florida.

Huawei CFO suing Canada, its border agency and the RCMP

TORONTO (AP)—An executive of Chinese tech giant Huawei is suing the Canadian government, its border agency and the national police force, saying they detained, searched and interrogated her before telling her she was under arrest.

Lawyers for Meng Wanzhou said Sunday they filed a notice of civil claim in the British Columbia Supreme Court. Canada arrested Meng, the daughter of Huawei's founder, at the request of the U.S. on Dec. 1 at Vancouver's airport. She is wanted on fraud charges that she misled banks about the company's business dealings in Iran.

The suit alleges that instead of immediately arresting her, authorities interrogated Meng "under the guise of a routine customs" examination and used the opportunity to "compel her to provide evidence and information." The suit alleges Canada Border Service Agency agents seized her electronic devices, obtained passwords and unlawfully viewed the contents and intentionally failed to adviser her of the true reasons for her detention. The suit said only after three hours was she told she was under arrest and had right to counsel.

"This case concerns a deliberate and pre-meditated effort on the part of the defendant officers to obtain evidence and information from the plaintiff in a manner which they knew constituted serious violations of the plaintiff's rights," the claim says.

Meng is out on bail and living in Vancouver awaiting extradition proceedings.

On Friday, Canadian Justice Department officials gave the go-ahead for her extradition proceedings to begin. Meng is due in court Wednesday to set a date for the proceedings to start. It could be several months or even years before her case is resolved.

Meng's arrest set off a diplomatic furor and severely strained Canadian relations with China. Beijing has accused Washington of a politically motivated attempt to hurt the company.

China detained former Canadian diplomat Michael Kovrig and Canadian entrepreneur Michael Spavor on Dec. 10 in an apparent attempt to pressure Canada to release Meng.

A Chinese court also sentenced a Canadian to death in a sudden retrial, overturning a 15-year prison term handed down earlier. Kovrig and Spavor haven't had access to a lawyer or to their families since being arrested.

Nicolas Dorion, a spokesman for the Canada Border Services Agency, said it's not a practice of the agency to comment on legal matters that are before the courts. A justice department spokesman referred comment to the border agency, and a spokesman for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police said they were unlikely to comment Sunday.

Gary Botting, a Vancouver extradition lawyer who is not representing Meng, said Canada's Border Services Agency tends to overstep.

"They took her under custody without telling her why," Botting said. "They disguised the real reason why they detained her. Her rights were violated."

Botting said they had no reason to detain her as she had travelled to Canada many times before. "They are trying to get all this information ahead of time and they know ultimately an arrest was in the works," he said.

Julian Ku, senior associate dean for academic affairs at Hofstra Law, noted the civil action is separate and apart from Meng's extradition proceeding. He said the lawsuit will allow her to argue she is being unfairly treated and support her broader public relations claim that the detention is part of a U.S and Canadian political conspiracy against Huawei.

Lynette Ong, an associate professor of political science at the University of Toronto who focuses on China, quipped that the detained Canadians should take Beijing to court for violation of basic human rights, taking a leaf from the Meng lawsuit.

"The violation of their human rights is so much more grave than violation of her constitutional rights," Ong said. "But that's not even possible for them. The fact that they were denied a lawyer in the first place means they are not entitled to any justice."

Nation

Death toll rises to 22 as tornadoes, severe storms hit South

This photo provided by James Lally shows a funnel-shaped cloud on I-10 near Marianna, Fla., Sunday, March 3, 2019. AP

BEAUREGARD, Ala. (AP)—A tornado roared into southeast Alabama and killed at least 22 people and injured several others Sunday, part of a severe storm system that caused catastrophic damage and unleashed other tornadoes around the Southeast.

"We are at 22 right now. Unfortunately, I feel like that number may rise yet again," Lee County Sheriff Jay Jones said of the death toll.

Drones flying overheard equipped with heat-seeking devices had scanned the area for survivors but the dangerous conditions halted the search late Sunday, Jones said. An intense ground search would resume Monday morning.

Jones said the twister traveled straight down a key local artery in Beauregard and that the path of damage and destruction appeared at least a half mile wide. He said single-family homes and mobile homes were destroyed, adding some homes were reduced to slabs. He had told reporters earlier that several people were taken to hospitals, some with "very serious injuries."

Lee County Coroner Bill Harris told The Associated Press that he had to call in help from the state, because there were more bodies than his four-person office can handle.

The National Weather Service confirmed late Sunday a tornado with at least an F3 rating and a track at least half a mile (.8 kilometers) wide caused the deadly destruction in Alabama.

Dozens of emergency responders rushed to join search and rescue efforts in hard-hit Lee County after what forecasters said they think was a large tornado touched down Sunday afternoon, unleashed by a powerful storm system that also slashed its way across parts of Georgia, South Carolina and Florida.

Radar and video evidence showed what looked like a large tornado crossing the area near Beauregard shortly after 2 p.m. Sunday, said meteorologist Meredith Wyatt with the Birmingham office of the National Weather Service.

"It appears it stayed on the ground for at least a mile and maybe longer," Jones told the AP.

After nightfall Sunday, the rain had stopped and pieces of metal debris and tree branches littered roadways in Beauregard. Two sheriff's vehicles blocked reporters and others from reaching the worst-hit area. Power appeared to be out in many places.

President Donald Trump tweeted late Sunday, "To the great people of Alabama and surrounding areas: Please be careful and safe. ... To the families and friends of the victims, and to the injured, God bless you all!"

Rita Smith, spokeswoman for the Lee County Emergency Management Agency, said about 150 first responders had quickly jumped in to efforts to search the debris after the storm struck in Beauregard. At least one trained canine could be seen with search crews as numerous ambulances and emergency vehicles, lights flashing, converged on the area.

No deaths had been reported Sunday evening from storm-damaged Alabama counties outside Lee County, said Gregory Robinson, spokesman for the Alabama Emergency Management Agency. But he said crews were still surveying damage in several counties in the southwestern part of the state.

Numerous tornado warnings were posted across parts of Alabama, Georgia, Florida and South Carolina on Sunday afternoon as the powerful storm system raced across the region. Weather officials said they confirmed other tornadoes around the region by radar alone and would send teams out early Monday to assess those and other storms.

In rural Talbotton, Georgia, about 80 miles (130 kilometers) south of Atlanta, a handful of people were injured by either powerful straight-line winds or a tornado that destroyed several mobile homes and damaged other buildings, said Leigh Ann Erenheim, director of the Talbot County Emergency Management Agency.

Televised broadcast news footage showed smashed buildings with rooftops blown away, cars overturned and debris everywhere. Trees all around had been snapped bare of branches.

"The last check I had was between six and eight injuries," Erenheim said in a phone interview. "From what I understand it was minor injuries, though one fellow did say his leg might be broken."

She said searches of damaged homes and structures had turned up no serious injuries or deaths there.

Henry Wilson of the Peach County Emergency Management Agency near Macon in central Georgia said a barn had been destroyed and trees and power poles had been snapped, leaving many in the area without power.

Authorities in southwest Georgia are searching door-to-door in darkened neighborhoods after a possible tornado touched down in the rural city of Cairo, about 33 miles (53 kilometers) north of Tallahassee, Florida, on Sunday evening. There were no immediate reports of serious injuries.

Authorities said a tornado was confirmed by radar in the Florida Panhandle late Sunday afternoon. A portion of Interstate 10 on the Panhandle was blocked in one direction for a time in Walton County in the aftermath, said Don Harrigan, a meteorologist for the National Weather Service in Tallahassee.

"There's a squall line moving through the area," Harrigan told AP. "And when you have a mature line of storms moving into an area where low level winds are very strong, you tend to have tornadoes developing. It's a favorable environment for tornados."

The threat of severe weather continued into the late-night hours. A tornado watch was in effect for much of eastern Georgia, including Athens, Augusta and Savannah. The tornado watch also covered a large area of South Carolina, including the cities of Charleston and Columbia.

ACROSS THE NATION

Police: Husband, not panhandler, killed woman in Baltimore

BALTIMORE (AP)—A Maryland woman whose death last year was blamed on an attack by a panhandler was actually killed by her husband and his adult daughter, police said Sunday. Keith Smith, 52, had told police that his wife, Jacquelyn, an engineer from Harford County, was trying to give money to a panhandler at a traffic light when she was robbed and fatally stabbed. Her death attracted national attention and prompted many to regard panhandlers warily. Even Oprah Winfrey, whose early career included several years covering Baltimore news, commented that she would "think twice" about giving to panhandlers after reading about Jacquelyn's death. But at a news conference Sunday, Police Commissioner Michael Harrison said the panhandler story is not true. He announced first-degree murder charges against Keith Smith and his daughter, Valeria Smith, 28.

Cab driver found fatally stabbed; Police looking for suspect

NEW YORK (AP)—The New York Police Department is looking for the attacker of a 27-year-old for-hire cab driver who was found fatally stabbed in his car. Police say the car was parked on a Bronx roadway around 9 p.m. Saturday. The driver was inside, with stab wounds to his neck and chest. The New York Times reported the driver, Ganiou Gandonou, was a for-hire driver with Uber, but it was unclear if he had been driving on a job at the time. An Uber spokesman, Grant Klinzman, told the Times his death was "a horribly tragic incident." A group that represents for-hire drivers is offering a $3,000 reward for information leading to an arrest.

Circus clown who ran for Congress dies in South Carolina

CAMDEN, S.C. (AP)—A professional circus clown who ran for Congress last year has died in South Carolina. An obituary from Kornegay Funeral Home of Lugoff, South Carolina, says 53-year-old Steve Lough died on Feb. 23. The funeral home did not say how he died. Lough of Camden played up his career as a clown for Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey Circus when he ran unsuccessfully in a crowded Democratic primary for the seat of Republican U.S. Rep. Ralph Norman. Lough's campaign website featured photos of the candidate in full clown makeup. His slogan was "Aim high! Vote Lough!" The State reports that Lough launched his 2018 campaign saying: "They joke that the president and Congress are all clowns. Well, in my professional opinion, they are the worst clowns I've ever seen."

'Absolute miracle:' Rescuers find missing California sisters

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Armed with some outdoor survival training, granola bars and pink rubber boots, 5- and 8-year-old sisters survived 44 hours in rugged Northern California wilderness before they were found dehydrated and cold but in good spirits on Sunday, authorities said.

A fire chief and firefighter from a local volunteer department found Leia and Caroline Carrico in a wooded area about 1½ miles (2.3 kilometers) from their home in the small community of Benbow, where they had last been seen Friday afternoon, Humboldt County Sheriff William Honsal said.

Benbow is about 200 miles (320 kilometers) northwest of Sacramento.

The girls were "safe and sound" and uninjured, thanks in part to survival training they got with their local 4-H club, Honsal said.

"This is an absolute miracle," he said. "This is rugged territory, this is an extreme environment. How they were out there for 44 hours is pretty amazing."

A photo of one of the girls posted by the sheriff's office and already being widely shared on social media shows her wearing pink rubber boots, dirty jeans, a long pink shirt and a woolen cap. She is standing while a firefighter kneels down and talks to her.

One person commented that "she looks like a seasoned outdoor gal" while another said, "those little adventurers will sure have a story to tell!"

Honsal said the girls were given fresh warm clothes, water and food and were being assessed but were in good spirits and doing well.

"A lot of us didn't get any sleep the last 48 hours or so," Honsal said. "To have a positive outcome like this is just absolutely amazing ... These girls definitely have a survival story to tell."

He said the firefighters who found the girls had followed their boot prints. The firefighters were part of a massive search of a vast and rugged rural area that included a dozen agencies, including the National Guard, helicopters and tracking dogs.

Rescuers were hopeful about finding the girls Saturday after they came across prints from their boots and wrappers from granola bars, Lt. Mike Fridley said.

"The wrappers showed us a direction from where they started to where the wrappers ended up at," Fridley said.

Fridley said he was the one who got to call the girls' mother and tell them her daughters were alive.

"She melted on the phone," he said.

Asia

First lull in Kashmir since latest India-Pakistan escalation

MUZAFFARABAD, Pakistan (AP)—Residents near the disputed boundary in divided Kashmir region said Sunday it was quiet overnight, their first lull since a dangerous escalation between Pakistan and India erupted last week bringing the two nuclear-armed rivals close to full-out war.

Many villagers used the calm in Pakistani-held Kashmir to leave their homes in Chakoti area along the so-called Line of Control, the demarcation line that divides the troubled Himalayan region on an Indian and a Pakistani sector, and move to safety.

Nazakat Hussain said his and many other families have no underground shelters or bunkers on their land to protect them and have no other option but to leave. The rough cold weather and snow, along with the cross-border shooting, prevented them from leaving earlier.

Pakistani government official Moazzam Zafar said some 200 families have already taken shelter in three large government buildings in the territory. Zafar said the authorities were providing warm clothing, bedding, food and medicines, and would establish more such camps.

AP

A member of the civil society group, Citizens of Lahore, participates in a candlelit vigil against war, in Lahore, Pakistan, Sunday, March 3, 2019.

At least eight civilians and two soldiers have been killed in Pakistani-controlled Kashmir since tensions soared following India's airstrike last Tuesday inside Pakistan that New Delhi said targeted militants behind a Feb. 14 suicide bombing in Indian-controlled Kashmir that killed 40 Indian troops.

Pakistan retaliated, shooting down a fighter jet on Wednesday and detaining its pilot, who was returned to India on Friday. India, in turn, on Saturday handed over the body of a Pakistani civilian prisoner beaten to death by inmates in a jail in India last week. The man, Skahir Ullah, was buried later Sunday in his home village of Sialkot in Punjab province.

Kashmir has been divided between India and Pakistan practically since their independence from British rule in 1947. The two countries each claim Kashmir in its entirety and have fought two of the three wars between them over it.

The rivals struck a cease-fire deal in 2003 but regularly violate it and trade cross-border fire.

On Sunday British Prime Minister Theresa may spoke by phone with Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan welcoming the return of the captured Indian pilot and reduction in tensions.

But she also urged Khan to crack down on terrorist groups operating in Pakistan, according to a Downing Street statement.

"The Prime Minister emphasized the importance of Pakistan taking action against all terrorist groups, in support of global efforts to combat terrorism," the statement said.

5 years on, Malaysia open to proposals to resume MH370 hunt

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP)—Malaysia's transport minister said Sunday that the government is open to new proposals from U.S. technology firm Ocean Infinity or any other companies to resume the hunt for Flight 370, as families of passengers marked the fifth anniversary of the jet's mysterious disappearance.

Ocean Infinity mounted a "no cure, no fee" search for the plane in the southern Indian Ocean in January 2018 that ended in May without any clue on where it could have crashed. But the company's CEO, Oliver Plunkett, said in a video shown at the public remembrance event at a mall near Kuala Lumpur that the company hopes to resume the hunt with better technology it obtained in the past year.

The Ocean Infinity mission came a year after an official search by Malaysia, Australia and China ended in futility.

Plunkett said his company has better technology now after successfully locating an Argentinian submarine in November, a year after it went missing. He said the firm is still reviewing all possible data on Flight 370 and thinking about how it can revive its failed mission.

"We haven't given up hope. ... We hope we can continue the search in due course," Plunkett said.

Transport Minister Anthony Loke said it's been frustrating that the two searches failed to produce any clues and that he "welcomes credible leads and also concrete proposals to resume the search."

He told reporters later Sunday that the government is "waiting for specific proposals, in particular from Ocean Infinity." He brushed off suggestions of offering rewards to find the plane, but said the government is willing to discuss proposals from any companies prepared to resume the search.

"There must be a proposal from a specific company ... we cannot just be out there without credible leads. That's the most practical thing to do," Loke said.

The plane vanished with 239 people on board on March 8, 2014, while flying from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing. Confirmed debris that washed ashore in the western Indian Ocean helped narrow the search area where Ocean Infinity focused, but it failed to uncover any evidence.

A Malaysian-led independent investigation report released last July showed lapses in the government's response and raised the possibility of "intervention by a third party."

Investigators, however, said the cause of the disappearance cannot be determined until the wreckage and the plane's black boxes are found. The report reiterated Malaysia's assertion that the plane was deliberately diverted and flown for over seven hours after severing communications.

But it said there was no evidence of abnormal behavior or stress in the two pilots that could lead them to hijack the plane. All the other passengers were also cleared by police and had no pilot training.

Voice 370, a support group for next-of-kin, expressed hope that the new government that won a general election in May last year will do more to encourage search missions and seek new clues.

The group's spokeswoman, Grace Nathan, urged the government to set aside up to $70 million—the amount it agreed to pay Ocean Infinity had it found the plane—to encourage exploration companies to take on "no cure, no fee" missions so that Flight 370's passengers will not have died in vain.

"It is a wound that cannot heal" if there is no closure, Nathan said.

US, South Korea end spring military drills to back diplomacy

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—South Korea and the U.S. are eliminating their massive springtime military drills and replacing them with smaller exercises in what they call an effort to support diplomacy aimed at resolving the North Korean nuclear crisis.

The decision announced by both countries Sunday came after President Donald Trump complained about the cost of joint drills even as his high-stakes second summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un collapsed last week.

"The reason I do not want military drills with South Korea is to save hundreds of millions of dollars for the U.S. for which we are not reimbursed," Trump tweeted Sunday. "That was my position long before I became President. Also, reducing tensions with North Korea at this time is a good thing!"

The drills' cancellation is an olive branch to North Korea, which has viewed them as an invasion rehearsal. But some experts say it will likely weaken the allies' military readiness amid worries that tensions erupt again in the wake of the failed nuclear summit in Vietnam.

The Pentagon said in a release that the U.S. and South Korean defense chiefs decided to conclude the Key Resolve and Foal Eagle series of exercises. It said the allies agreed to maintain firm military readiness through newly designed command post exercises and revised field training programs.

Acting U.S. Secretary of Defense Patrick Shanahan and South Korean Defense Minister Jeong Kyeong-doo "made clear that the alliance decision to adapt our training program reflected our desire to reduce tension and support our diplomatic efforts to achieve complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in a final, fully verified manner," the statement said.

Seoul's Defense Ministry released a similar statement.

Jeong expressed his regrets at the lack of agreement at the Trump-Kim summit but still hopes that Washington and Pyongyang will continue negotiations, the South Korean statement said.

The new training, dubbed "Dong Maeng," which means "alliance" in English, starts Monday and runs through March 12. It will focus on "strategic operational and tactical aspects of general military operations on the Korean Peninsula," South Korea's military and the U.S.-South Korean combined forces command said in a joint statement.

According to U.S. officials, the new training will be done in smaller drills, tabletop exercises and simulations, and will involve smaller units such as battalions and companies rather than massive formations involving thousands of troops, as they had in the past.

Officials said the Pentagon would focus on smaller exercises and mission essential tasks, which include the ability to integrate airstrikes and the use of other weapons systems, drones, surveillance assets, logistics and communications.

In November, a month before he resigned as defense secretary, Jim Mattis disclosed that the U.S. and South Korea would scale back and tone down the spring exercises. He said the aim was to avoid setting back diplomacy over North Korea's nuclear weapons. He described it as a reorganization of the exercises, not an end to maneuvers on the peninsula.

Trump has long complained about the cost of military drills with South Korea.

After his second summit with Kim ended without any agreement in Hanoi on Thursday, Trump spoke again about the cost of annual military drills. "It's a very, very expensive thing and we do have to think about that, too," Trump told reporters.

Following his first summit with Kim in Singapore last June, Trump caught many in the United States and South Korea by surprise by suspending the allies' summertime military drills. He called joint drills "very provocative" and "massively expensive."

World

Venezuela's Guaido urges supporters to protest on Monday

AP

Accompanied by his wife Fabiana Rosales, Venezuela's self-proclaimed interim president Juan Guaido waves to supporters outside the Foreign Ministry in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Friday, March 1, 2019.

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP)—Opposition leader Juan Guaido urged supporters to stage huge demonstrations Monday coinciding with his planned return to Venezuela, in a challenge expected to escalate his power struggle with President Nicolas Maduro.

"See you tomorrow," Guaido said in a live video address on social media Sunday night. He delivered a defiant warning to Venezuelan authorities, saying any attempt to detain him "would be without doubt one of the last mistakes" that the government commits.

Guaido spoke to the camera in a room with his wife, Fabiana Rosales, beside him and a Venezuelan flag in the background. Guaido, the leader of the opposition-controlled National Assembly who has declared himself interim president, did not say where he was and he did not reveal any details about how he planned to return to Venezuela.

Earlier Sunday, Guaido tweeted a photo of himself walking across an airfield ahead of his departure from the naval base in Salinas, Ecuador, where he met with Ecuadorian President Lenin Moreno on Saturday. Guaido said he was "taking off," but did not say where the plane was heading.

In Venezuela, anticipation grew ahead of the expected arrival of Guaido, who says Maduro must be replaced by a transitional government that lays the groundwork for free and fair elections in a country suffering shortages of food and medicine.

Opposition activists circulated a call on social media for people to gather Monday morning at the Alfredo Sadel plaza in Las Mercedes, a shopping and entertainment area in Caracas where protests have been held in the past. Protests were planned at other locations around the country.

The government, meanwhile, urged Venezuelans to celebrate the Carnival season slated for Monday and Tuesday by traveling to beaches and other holiday spots. Many people don't have the resources for leisure trips and opposition supporters say the country should not celebrate during its political and humanitarian crisis.

Venezuela's vice president, Delcy Rodriguez, did not directly address a question about whether Guaido faces arrest during an interview with Russian state-owned TV channel RT. But she left open the possibility, saying Guaido had broken the law and is "a Venezuelan who conspires with foreign governments to overthrow a constitutional government."

Rodriguez spoke during a visit to Russia, which backs Maduro and has accused the United States of plotting his downfall.

Guaido was in Ecuador as part of a tour of Latin American countries designed to increase pressure on Maduro to resign. Maduro says Guaido is part of a U.S.-backed plot against him and that a failed attempt by the opposition to bring aid into Venezuela from Brazil and Colombia last weekend was a political stunt.

The United States and about 50 other countries recognize Guaido as Venezuela's president, arguing that Maduro's re-election last year was a sham. EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini has warned against any action by the Venezuelan government against him.

"In this respect any measure that could put at risk Juan Guaido's freedom, safety or personal integrity would represent a major escalation of tensions and meet the firm condemnation of the international community," Mogherini said.

IS fighters put up fierce resistance to defend last pocket

BAGHOUZ, Syria (AP)—Islamic State militants are desperately fighting to hang on to the last tiny piece of territory they hold on the riverside in eastern Syria, deploying snipers, guided missiles and surprise tunnel attacks. The resistance prompted a fierce pounding Sunday by the U.S-led coalition and its ground allies in their final push to end the extremist group's territorial hold.

Rings of black smoke billowed over the besieged speck of land still controlled by the group in the village of Baghouz, after airstrikes hit several targets.

Mortar rounds from a hill overlooking a tent encampment where the militants are still holed up rang into the night.

The U.S.-backed force known as the Syrian Democratic Forces resumed an offensive to recapture the area in Baghouz on Friday night, after a two-week pause to allow for the evacuation of civilians from the area. Retaking the sliver of land would be a milestone in the devastating four-year campaign to end IS' self-proclaimed Islamic caliphate that once straddled vast territory across Syria and Iraq.

The group continues to be a threat, however, with sleeper cells in scattered desert pockets along the porous border between the two countries.

SDF commanders estimate that hundreds of fighters remain in Baghouz, taking cover in tunnels and trenches.

A senior SDF commander described the militants as "rats" but acknowledged that they're still fighting to the bitter end.

Commander Akeed, who leads one of the main fronts in the last battle against IS, said the militants are sticking to their trademark techniques, carrying out swift attacks without aiming to hold ground but laying the area with mines to increase casualties. They also deploy "inghimasiyoun," a term that the group uses to refer to infiltrators who enter areas behind their enemies' lines, in a bid to take hostages.

Early Sunday, one of Akeed's units came under attack from a group of 10 IS militants, including four women who emerged from a tunnel but were met with fire. At least two militants died but the rest escaped, he said.

"They have said they will engage and won't leave," Akeed told The Associated Press from his position, hundreds of meters from a very noisy front line. "They are strong enemies but they are besieged from three fronts. What could they do? Attack to prove themselves."

What appears to be a major weapons depot was targeted Saturday in the opening salvo of a ground assault on the tent encampment and parts of the villages still in IS hands. On Sunday, airstrikes continued to hit the depot, as fire raged for more than 24 hours and ignited ammunition flew in the air.

Other airstrikes hit another mortar depot on the other edge of the tent encampment, which days ago was full of residents before they were evacuated ahead of the military assault.

WORLD BRIEFS

US closes Jerusalem consulate, demoting Palestinian mission

JERUSALEM (AP)—The United States has officially shuttered its consulate in Jerusalem, downgrading the status of its main diplomatic mission to the Palestinians by folding it into the U.S. Embassy to Israel. For decades, the consulate functioned as a de facto embassy to the Palestinians. Now, that outreach will be handled by a Palestinian affairs unit, under the command of the embassy. The symbolic shift hands authority over U.S. diplomatic channels with the West Bank and Gaza to ambassador David Friedman, a longtime supporter and fundraiser for the West Bank settler movement and fierce critic of the Palestinian leadership. The announcement from the State Department came early Monday in Jerusalem, the merger effective that day. "This decision was driven by our global efforts to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of our diplomatic engagements and operations," State Department spokesman Robert Palladino said in a statement. "It does not signal a change of U.S. policy on Jerusalem, the West Bank, or the Gaza Strip." When first announced by U.S. Secretary Mike Pompeo in October, the move infuriated Palestinians, fueling their suspicions that the U.S. was recognizing Israeli control over east Jerusalem and the West Bank, territories that Palestinians seek for a future state. Palestinian official Saeb Erekat called the move "the final nail in the coffin" for the U.S. role in peacemaking.

Algeria's president runs for 5th term, promises key changes

ALGIERS, Algeria (AP)—Algeria's ailing president said Sunday that if he wins a fifth term in April, he would promote political changes that his critics have demanded and call an early presidential election in which he would not run. In a written message to the nation, President Abdelaziz Bouteflika said if he is re-elected April 18, he would organize a public referendum on a new Constitution and respond to an opposition demand for an independent electoral commission. The longtime leader also vowed to immediately call a "national conference" to set a date and prepare for another presidential election. Bouteflika's decision to run next month has prompted rare, massive protests in recent days. "I have heard the pleas of protesters and especially thousands of young people who asked about our nation's future," he wrote in his public message. Bouteflika was first elected in 1999. Questions about his fitness for office have grown since he suffered a stroke in 2013 and remained largely out of public view during his fourth term. He turned 82 on Saturday and underwent medical checks in Switzerland last week. Neither the government nor news media reported if he was back in Algeria.

Gazans resume minor pilgrimage after years of Egyptian ban

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP)—Palestinians in the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip resumed a minor pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia, known as the "umrah," on Sunday after nearly five years of an Egyptian ban. The first convoy of 800 Palestinians passed into Egypt through Gaza's Rafah crossing. Airplanes will carry the Palestinians from the Egyptian capital to Mecca, Islam's holiest city. "It's an incredible feeling, thank God for that. We have waited for this moment since 2014," said Fathia Abu Eita, a passenger on the Cairo-bound bus. Egypt halted the umrah program for Gazans in 2015 over instability in the northern Sinai that borders the Palestinian enclave, but still allowed transit for the main hajj pilgrimage. Egypt largely sealed off its border with Gaza when the Hamas militant group forcibly wrested control from the Western-backed Palestinian Authority in a 2007, after winning legislative elections a year earlier. As Cairo's relations improved with Hamas, Egypt started reopening the border more regularly last summer, in part pressured by Hamas' violent demonstrations against the crippling Egyptian-Israeli blockade.

Focus

Study: US pedestrian deaths hit highest number since 1990

AP
In this Dec. 26, 2018 file photo, pedestrians are silhouetted against wet pavement as they walk in the Country Club Plaza shopping district in Kansas City, Mo.

DETROIT (AP)—The number of pedestrians killed on U.S. roads last year was the highest in 28 years, an increase due in part to driver and walker distraction, alcohol and drug impairment and more SUVs on the road, a safety organization report says.

Using data reported by states for the first half of 2018, the Governors Highway Safety Association estimates that 6,227 pedestrians were killed last year. That's up 4 percent from 2017 and 35 percent — or more than 1,500 additional deaths — from 2008.

The association says more people are walking to work and they're more distracted by smartphones. America's massive switch from cars to SUVs and light trucks caused more deaths because the taller SUVs tend to hit pedestrians in the head and upper torso, causing more severe injuries, the report said.

"At the same impact speed, a pedestrian is much more likely to die in an SUV crash than in a car crash," said Richard Retting, a consultant and former top traffic safety official with the city of New York who authored the report. "Even at 20 or 25 miles per hour, being hit by an SUV, the chance of fatal injuries increases significantly."

The number of pedestrian deaths involving SUVs rose 50 percent from 2013 to 2017, while passenger-car-related deaths increased by 30 percent, the study found. The number of walkers killed by passenger cars was still higher in 2017 at 2,279, but SUVs accounted for 1,097 deaths.

Pedestrian deaths had been declining for decades until 2009, when smartphone sales and data use began to spike, Retting said. While Retting said the correlation between the two needs to be studied more, phone use is one of the only variables that could cause the increase in deaths. "Cellphone use is one of the few metrics I can find that shows a consistent change, a large scale change, year after year," Retting said.

AP
This image from video provided by KTLA-TV shows a van that crashed into a bus stop, striking four pedestrians in the Boyle Heights area of Los Angeles Friday, Feb. 22, 2019. There was no immediate information about the pedestrians, including their conditions.

In about half the fatal crashes, either the driver or the pedestrian was impaired by alcohol, with blood alcohol levels of 0.08 grams per deciliter, the study found.

The report also says most deaths happen on local roads at night and away from intersections, and it called for safer road crossings. Night pedestrian fatalities increased by 45 percent from 2008 to 2017, while daytime deaths rose a much smaller 11 percent.

Retting said municipal governments should evaluate pedestrian crossing patterns and consider installing crosswalks and lights even if there's no intersection.

The increase in pedestrian deaths from 2008 to 2017 came as overall traffic deaths fell 6 percent, the report said.

It also called for law enforcement and safety education campaigns to make sure drivers and walkers can safely coexist, as well as for road safety audits.

It said that 23 states saw declines in pedestrian deaths during the first half of last year, with six states reporting double-digit drops.

Retting said he expects pedestrian deaths to fall as more SUVs and cars are equipped with automatic emergency braking and pedestrian detection systems. Most automakers in the U.S. have pledged to make automatic braking standard across their lineups by September of 2022.

Overdrive

AUTO REVIEW: Hyundai's Ioniq hybrid hatchback starts at $22,400, gets up to 55 mpg

By EMMA JAYNE WILLIAMS
FORT WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM

Hyundai made automotive history for 2017, introducing three new electrified vehicles based on the same design and chassis — the Ioniq Hybrid, Ioniq Plug-in Hybrid and Ioniq Electric — and offers new and broader applications of active safety features, and enhanced voice recognition for the 2019 model year.

Driver Attention Alert and High Beam Assist are now available; navigation using natural-language voice-recognition and POI-search database provided by HERE is optional; and Automatic Emergency Braking, Lane Keep Assist and Smart Cruise Control are added to the SEL trim.

The driver-attention feature visually alerts the driver if distracted driving is detected, indicating the need to take a break. Smart cruise maintains a constant speed and following distance without input from the driver, and cancels automatically when speed drops below five mph.

The basic Ioniq Hybrid is available in three trims, with prices ranging from $22,400 for a very basic Blue model to $24,950 for the SEL, and $28,550 for the well-equipped Limited version.

I drove a Limited model in Ceramic White, riding on distinctive 17-inch Eco-Spoke alloy wheels, with wide, flat "V" spokes featuring solid-black inserts, wearing low-rolling-resistance, high-silica tires for better all-around performance.

Ioniq (a name derived from lithium-ION polymer battery and uniIQue) is the most-aerodynamic hybrid, with a sleek profile, integrated rear spoiler, wheel air curtains, and underbody cover. The Ioniq uses significantly less kWh annually and features very low operating cost per 25 miles driven, at just under $1.

Its low-resistance design aids in the incredible fuel efficiency and includes an Active Air Flap that dynamically adjusts to driving conditions — open for greater airflow for engine cooling in stop-and-go traffic, closed for better aerodynamics at cruising speed.

Air is directed over and around the front wheels and tires by Wheel Air Curtains, while the Underbody Cover helps smooth air flow under the vehicle. A sporty hatchback profile is inspired by Ioniq's aerodynamic efficiency.

In the hybrid, a 1.6-liter GDI four-cylinder engine, working with a 32kW electric motor, produces 139 combined horsepower, which is delivered to the front wheels by a six-speed EcoShift Dual Clutch Transmission with steering wheel-mounted paddle shifters, and Drive Mode Select for a nimble drive through traffic and a smooth drive at highway speeds.

Sport mode holds the lower gears longer and combines power from the engine and electric motor for maximum performance. Eco mode optimizes gear selection for efficiency, upshifting earlier to achieve class-leading fuel economy.

Depending on the mode selected, the Digital Instrument Cluster shows a vibrant changing color palette and dynamic graphics that monitor vehicle performance.

For example, driving style will be rated as Economical, Normal or Aggressive. When Sport mode is selected, a tachometer is shown and colors change to red to reflect the sense of sportiness. Normal mode is blue and Eco mode is green.

The dual-clutch transmission is a departure from the continuously variable transmissions found in the majority of hybrids, often referred to as having "rubber-band-like" acceleration.

Ioniq uses the gasoline engine and degenerative braking to add charge to the advanced 240-volt lithium-ion polymer battery with hybrid starter generator, which is designed to be one of the most compact and efficient batteries available. This charge can later be transferred from the battery to the electric motor to the wheels for acceleration when needed.

The battery pack is under the rear passenger area, thus lowering the vehicle's center of gravity, helping reduce energy loss due to inertia and, along with the hatchback and 60/40 split-folding rear seats, allowing more room and versatility for passengers and cargo.

This is the first time a 12-volt car battery has been consolidated with a high-voltage hybrid battery. The 1.56 kilowatt-hour hybrid battery can be used to self-charge the integrated 12-volt battery in the event it is run down too low to start the car — simply press a "battery reset" button. A traditional jump start can still be used if the self-start does not succeed. Both batteries are covered by a lifetime failure warranty for original owners.

The tester's HID headlights with C-shaped LED accents and high-beam assist had dynamic bending-light function, included in an Ultimate Package ($2,200), and were integrated into the sides of the gloss black hexagonal grille with 10 chrome-edged fins, adding to the aerodynamic appearance. Seven LED lights made up the eye-catching Daytime Running Lights, set deep in black C-shaped wheel air vents.

Visual aerodynamics were also enhanced by the raked roofline leading to the integrated hatchback spoiler, which split the window, similar to the rear of the Toyota Prius. LED taillights wrapped around the side to the hatch, underlining the split window.

The rear bumper featured a wide gloss-black insert with vertical reflectors in deep pockets, echoing the design of the front air vents, and a chrome strip on the bottom edge. The door handles with approach lighting, beltline, and lower sculpted door edges were trimmed with chrome. Heated side mirrors had black lower housings.

An aluminum hood and tailgate reduced weight by 27 pounds, with no disadvantages in noise or vibration. Aluminum in front and rear suspension components save about 22 pounds, all helping to increase fuel efficiency.

Inside, eco-consciousness was expressed via innovative use of eco-friendly and recycled/recyclable materials — Bio Thermal Plastic Olefin with 25 percent sugarcane for soft interior touches; Natural Plastic, recycled plastic combined with powdered wood and volcanic stone for reduced weight; Bio Metallic Paint with ingredients extracted from soybean oil to achieve polished metallic colors; and Bio Fabric with 20 percent sugarcane.

The perforated leather seats were Beige, with satin metallic and gloss-black interior trim, an illuminated ignition button, LED interior illumination, and a sporty thickly padded D-cut multi-function steering wheel featuring a wide metallic lower arm.

Five other exterior colors are available for the hybrid models: Intense Blue (dark royal), Black Noir Pearl, Summit Gray (dark blue/gray), Scarlet Red Pearl, and Symphony Air Silver. Two interior colors are available: charcoal and beige/charcoal.

My Limited added a tilt/slide sunroof, heated front seats, an auto-dimming rear-view mirror with HomeLink and compass, auto up/down passenger window, and premium doorsill plates.

The Ultimate Package brought headlights with dynamic bending light, rear parking sensors; Infinity Premium Audio with Clari-Fi Music Restoration Technology and eight-speakers; wireless device charging for compatible smartphones; integrated memory system for driver's seat; cargo cover; floor console-mounted rear vents; Blue Link Guidance Package; and navigation, which included an eight-inch touch screen.

Blue Link services were complimentary for three years, with enhanced safety, diagnostic, remote, and guidance services. Services include remote start with climate control, destination search by voice, remote door lock/unlock, car finder, enhanced roadside assistance, and stolen vehicle recovery. They can be accessed via buttons on the rearview mirror, MyHyundai.com, a smartphone app, and now with Amazon Alexa Blue Link skill and Google Assistant. Some services are also available with Android Wear and Apple Watch apps.

An uncommon feature of the navigation system is the ability to coach efficient driving using knowledge from 3-D technology to predict changing elevations on the road ahead.

While the small cupholders in the center console seemed to be an afterthought, there was a handy integrated tablet holder. Piano-key-style controls on the center stack were more ergonomic — easy to see, access, and use. The height adjustment for the front passenger seat was appreciated by our short occupants.

Apple CarPlay and Android Auto were standard, as well as Bluetooth hands-free phone system with voice recognition, HD radio technology, satellite radio, and iPod/USB and auxiliary input jacks.

In addition to the usual air bags, my Ioniq Limited addressed safety with an energy-absorbing steering column, front and rear crumple zones, blind-spot detection with rear cross-traffic alert and lane-change assist, lane departure warning with lane keep assist, automatic emergency braking with pedestrian detection, rear parking sensors, and a rear-view camera.

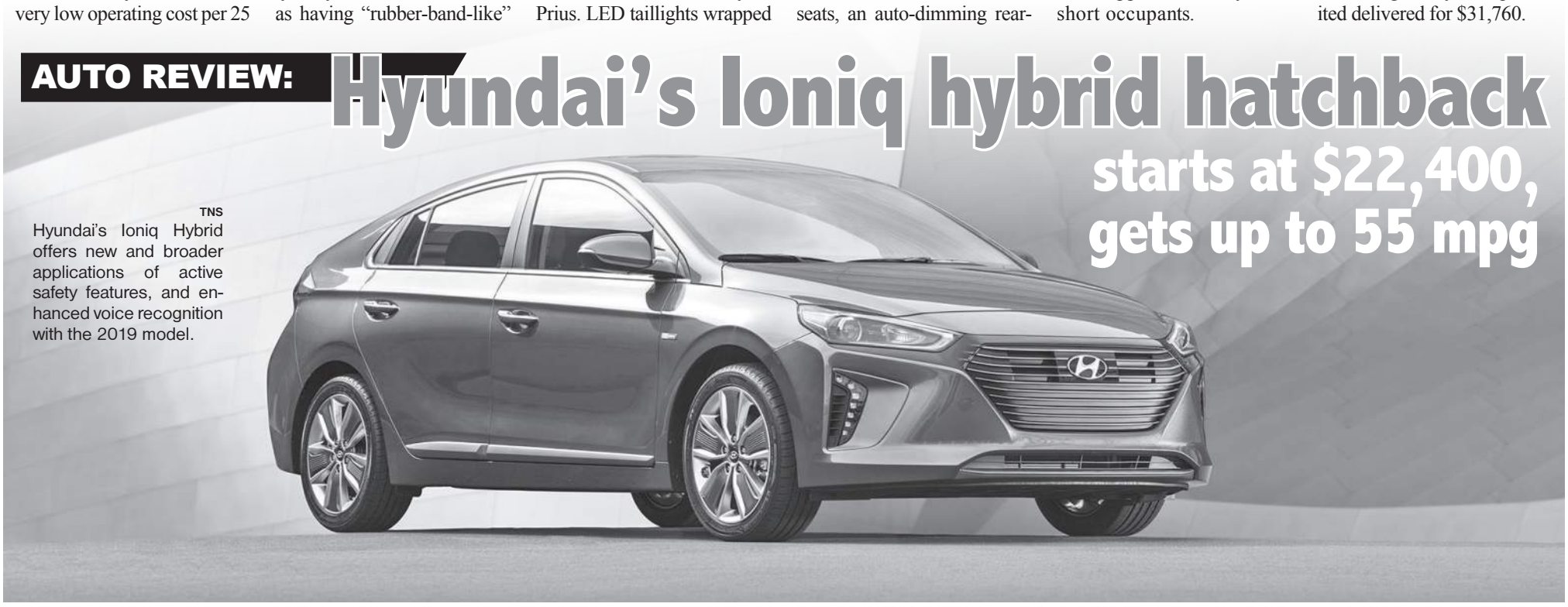
High impact-energy absorption from advance high strength steel, with minimal cabin intrusion, protects passengers in a collision. Automatic Emergency Braking warns the driver visually and acoustically, modulates braking force, and even applies braking if needed to avoid or mitigate a collision.

The best-in-class cargo area has 26.5 cubic feet of space — room for golf clubs, weekend luggage, gardening supplies, or weekly groceries. Front passengers had 38.2 inches of headroom and 42.2 inches of legroom, while rear passengers had 37.4/35.7 inches, slightly less than Blue and SEL models.

Ioniq is powerful, fun to drive with excellent ride quality, attractive, and comfortable for daily driving (I didn't do a road trip), and very economical to drive.

EPA ratings are 55 mpg city/54 highway/55 combined. Driving mostly in the neighborhood, I managed 53 mpg, according to the onboard computer.

With a Carpeted Floor Mat package ($125), the Ultimate Package, and $835 destination charges, my Ioniq Limited delivered for $31,760.



TNS

Hyundai's Ioniq Hybrid offers new and broader applications of active safety features, and enhanced voice recognition with the 2019 model.

Life & Style

When music producers are accused of being predators

Jessie Woo just wanted to sing. So when the budding vocalist met a successful music producer who told her he wanted to help her with her music, she believed him.

Then, one night seven years ago, the producer raped her, she said.

It was not the only time she was preyed upon by male producers early in her career, said Woo, a cast member of VH1's "Love & Hip Hop Miami" and host of several programs for BET Networks.

"With these producers, they're putting you in rooms that you've dreamed of. You're in the studio with artists like ... Lil Wayne, you're seeing T-Pain, you're seeing Beyonce. You're just seeing all these people stop by," she said. "So, you're like, 'OK, this person is a little creepy, but I have to be here ... I'm in the right place, I just got to maneuver around this person's creepiness. I got to figure out how to dodge the bullet.' And you're dodging somebody who is set out to abuse you."

Other women navigating the pop music industry have started to speak out about similar experiences, after the #MeToo movement has toppled powerful men in Hollywood, politics, business and more. As in those arenas, women can often find themselves being abused, sometimes sexually, by powerful men who hold the keys to success.

In 2017, Jessie Reyez, the singer who co-wrote the recent Calvin Harris hits "One Kiss" (with Dua Lipa) and "Promises" (with Sam Smith), released a powerful short film for her song "Gatekeeper." In it, she described how she was harassed by a producer: "Oh I'm the gatekeeper/Spread your legs/Open up/You could be famous/If you come up anywhere else, I'll erase you."

Last year, she identified her tormentor as music producer Noel "Detail" Fisher, who won a Grammy for co-writing the Beyonce and Jay-Z hit "Drunk in Love." Reyez said he had tried to belittle and demean her for not having sex with him, and for not having sex to advance her career.

Attempts to reach Fisher—who has also produced hits for Lil Wayne, Nicki Minaj, Wiz Khalifa and more—for comment about her allegation and others that followed were unsuccessful. Calls to phone numbers linked to him and to his relatives went unanswered.

Reyez's accusations were echoed by others who painted Fisher as a serial abuser.

"#METOO No wonder why I connected with your song GateKeepers @jessiereyez," singer Bebe Rexha, 29, wrote on Instagram in May 2018. "He tried the same thing with me. I was just 19. I ran out of the studio crying. Awful Human."

Another singer, Tinashe, commented on Rexha's post: "The only session I've been in to this day where I left due to being soooo uncomfortable. Glad he's being exposed for the (expletive) creep he is. Disgusting."

Janae Knox filed a lawsuit against Fisher in June 2018, claiming that after she was hired as his assistant, she experienced "severe and pervasive sexual harassment and sexual assault by Fisher," according to court documents. The suit claims Fisher asked Knox to shower with him and demanded sexual favors while she performed her job.

"Detail is a sexual predator and it is troubling that I was one of his victims. I want to encourage other victims to come forward because by doing so, they will begin to heal," Knox said in a statement to The Associated Press.

Isabella Mack, another Fisher assistant, filed a complaint against him when Knox did, claiming she was forcefully held against her will while he masturbated. The suit said Fisher also demanded she pose for nude pictures and videos, and that Mack suffered extreme emotional distress as a result.

"Detail has to be held accountable for his actions. I also hope that other music industry victims come forward because it is time to expose the system that enables men to abuse women in this business," Mack said in a statement to the AP. ***(AP)***

Michael Jackson's brothers say accusers' film neglects facts

LOS ANGELES (AP)—The family of Michael Jackson had a feeling the years-old child molestation allegations against the pop superstar would resurface at some point. So they say they weren't entirely surprised to learn that a forthcoming HBO documentary would feature two of his accusers.

"I thought, 'Oh here we go again,'" Jackson's oldest brother Jackie Jackson said Tuesday of the moment he learned of "Leaving Neverland" while on tour in Australia. "That's the first thing we said," Jackie Jackson said during an interview with The Associated Press seated next to his brothers Tito, Marlon and his nephew, Taj.

The documentary, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival to a standing ovation , will starting Sunday air the abuse allegations of two men , Wade Robson and James Safechuck, who had previously denied Jackson molested them and supported him to authorities and in Robson's case, very publicly.

"It was going to be the 10-year anniversary," Taj Jackson said, referring to his uncle's June 2009 death. "I remember a year ago I was like, 'This is too appetizing for the media. They're going to do something. This is the time when everyone comes out of the woodwork, the same cast, the same characters that have been discredited throughout the years. They have a platform now to talk about Michael Jackson."

It was the latest and most public pushback from the family and Jackson estate, which have repeatedly denounced the documentary in recent weeks through written statements, a lawsuit , and letters to HBO and Britain's Channel 4, which plan to air the film. HBO announced Wednesday that it will air a special on Monday night in which Oprah Winfrey also interviews Robson and Safechuck .

Their central criticism has been the film's failure to talk to family members or other defenders of Jackson, whom they insist never molested a child.

The brothers said they would have answered the allegations had the filmmakers asked them.

"Oh, we definitely would have come and talked to them about the situation ... to protect our brother," Tito Jackson said. "He's not here no more. He's passed, and, we're his brothers, we're supposed to do this."

Shark documentary released after filmmaker's diving death

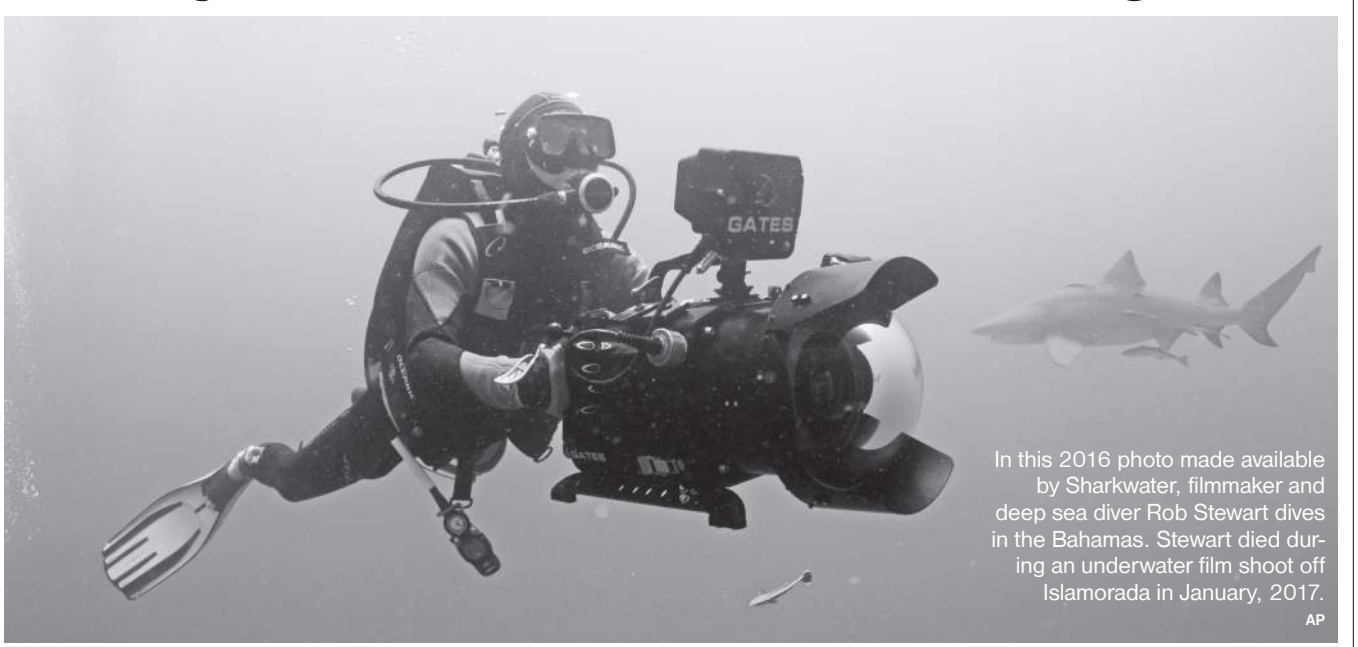
MIAMI (AP)—The family and friends of a Canadian filmmaker and conservationist who died during a shark-filming excursion in the Florida Keys are releasing his final documentary.

"Sharkwater Extinction" made a limited theatrical release Friday. The DVD is set for release March 19, and the film will stream on Amazon Prime starting in April, Sharkwater Productions said. It was first shown last fall at the Toronto Film Festival.

Rob Stewart's 2006 documentary, "Sharkwater," examined the impact of shark hunting on the ocean's ecosystem. His 2013 film, "Revolution," focused on environmental collapse.

Stewart's father, Brian Stewart, said 120 million people saw his son's first film, prompting bans around the world on shark finning, the practice of cutting the fins off sharks and discarding the rest of the fish. The new film continues to focus on the impact of shark hunting on the environment.

"He had a massive base around the world that wanted to see this movie finished," Brian Stewart said. "And that really kept us going."



In this 2016 photo made available by Sharkwater, filmmaker and deep sea diver Rob Stewart dives in the Bahamas. Stewart died during an underwater film shoot off Islamorada in January, 2017. AP

Stewart's parents said their 37-year-old son had already filmed about 400 hours of footage when he drowned in January 2017. He went missing while diving at the wreck of the Queen of Nassau in about 230 feet (70 meters) of water and about 6 miles (10 kilometers) from the Islamorada coast. His submerged body was found three days later, about 300 feet (90 meters) from where he was last spotted on the surface, following a massive search.

Stewart's mother, Sandra Stewart, said they knew they wanted to complete his final film but weren't initially sure where to start. They eventually found extensive notes on his tablet computer, which were used by editor Nick Hector to complete the film.

"When we found that we realized we could finish this," Sandra Stewart said.

Though "Sharkwater Extinction" might not be precisely what its maker had intended, Brian Stewart explained how his son's meticulous planning allowed them to tell most of the story that his son wanted to tell.

"We have all his notes about all the different locations around the world he wanted to go to and what his objective for each location was," Brian Stewart said. "He wrote outstanding notes."

Rob Stewart might be gone, but his parents said the outpouring of love and support that followed his passing showed them how important his work was. They said they hoped the new film leads to more action and even greater change.

"He wasn't in it for the money," Sandra Stewart said. "He just wanted everybody to see the film, love sharks, fall in love with the ocean creatures and work to protect them."

Experts say portrait isn't of George Washington's chef

PHILADELPHIA (AP)—A portrait long thought to be of George Washington's enslaved chef, who cooked for the former president at Mount Vernon and Philadelphia before escaping, is actually not of Hercules, and isn't even of a chef, art experts concluded after a two-year study.

Experts who gathered in 2017 at Mount Vernon, Washington's Virginia plantation, unanimously agree the 18th-century portrait believed to be of Hercules wearing a chef's toque is not actually of the man, Philly.com reported Friday. The findings are now public.

"There is a real sense of loss there. It's such a powerful portrait," Mount Vernon senior curator Susan P. Schoelwer told Philly.com.

Hercules had cooked for Washington for a number of years before escaping in 1797. He wasn't heard from again.

Schoelwer helped coordinate the gathering to discuss the mystery of "Presumed Portrait of George Washington's Cook." The portrait had long been attributed to Gilbert Stuart, best known for his unfinished portrait of Washington. But that also doesn't appear to be true.

Dorinda Evans, a Stuart scholar, said the portrait is "very different from how Stuart would have done it."

The experts agree the painting is from the 1700s and say the subject must be notable if a portrait was commissioned. Experts also said what was thought to be a toque is actually a headdress similar to ones worn in by free Dominicans in other paintings.

John Mayer launches foundation focused on veterans

NEW YORK (AP)—John Mayer is launching a foundation focused on improving the health of veterans through scientific research.

The Grammy-winning singer on Friday announced The Heart and Armor Foundation, which plans to focus on veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder and meeting the emerging needs of women veterans.

Though he publicly announced the foundation on Friday, Mayer has been working on the organization since 2012 alongside veterans, scientists and clinicians.

"We're going to the public with things like published research papers and having raised enough money to really build some pilot programs. We have some really great data and ... we want it to be working first so that a lot of the questions were answered before we brought things to people by way of awareness," Mayer said in an interview with The Associated Press. "I think it just makes it that much more compelling and much more concise to bring it to people with the message being, 'Hey, this is not taking something that is zero to try to get it to five. This is something that is at 50 and we want to get it to 100.'"

This June 27, 2017 file photo shows musician John Mayer in New York.
AP

Mayer, whose father was a World War II veteran, said part of the reason he started The Heart and Armor Foundation came after he visited the Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune in 2008.

"Now this was with a friend of mine, so I was just plus one and nobody knew that the musician-guy was going. That gave me a really fluorescent look at what was going on in the barracks. It wasn't like they rolled out the red carpet for a celebrity, it was kind of a normal day," he said. "It was going to the wounded warrior barracks that I think changed me forever. It immediately showed me that my notion of what I think (are) the wounds of war are completely wrong. The way in which I was proven wrong was so compelling and fascinating and nuanced."

The foundation has released 10 publications in peer-reviewed journals, developed an exercise-based intervention for PTSD and created a screening tool for nutrition in women veterans, among other accomplishments.

"I've been in meeting after meeting where people ask, 'Where did you get the money to do this exercise study? Where'd you get the money?' I'm like, 'Well I'll tell you.' People are excited about it before I tell them John Mayer did it," said Gerard Choucroun, executive director of The Heart and Armor Foundation.

The foundation also has a goal of bringing the military and veteran communities closer together with outreach, events and conversation. An event will be held Friday night called "How War Changes Women, How Women Change War" that will stream live at Facebook.com/JohnMayer and Facebook.com/HeartAndArmor at 7 p.m. Eastern.

'How to Train Your Dragon' stays at No. 1, 'Madea' a strong second

LOS ANGELES (AP)—"How To Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World" topped the North American box office for a second week, but close on its tail was Tyler Perry's final installment of the "Madea" franchise. Driven by a largely female audience, "A Madea Family Funeral" had a better-than-expected debut.

The third installment in the "How To Train Your Dragon" series grossed an estimated $30 million this weekend according to Universal Pictures on Sunday, bringing its domestic total just shy of $100 million. Worldwide, the DreamWorks Animation film has made over $375 million. In China alone it opened in first place with $33.4 million.

"A Madea Family Funeral" took second place at the domestic box office with an estimated $27 million, a third best for the 15-year-old franchise. The "Madea" films have never been all that popular with critics—this one splattered out with a 24 percent on Rotten Tomatoes—but audiences have never seemed to care. This time around the audience, which was 67 percent female and 78 percent over the age of 25, gave the film a solid A- CinemaScore.

"That character just resonates," said Comscore senior media analyst Paul Dergarabedian. "These films are absolutely critic proof. The audience has spoken and they love Madea and they're saying goodbye."

Further down the charts, the Neil Jordan stalker-thriller "Greta," starring Isabelle Huppert and Chloe Grace Moretz, opened in eighth place to a mediocre $4.6 million.

"Greta was just another newcomer released in 2019 that had a rough go in a slow marketplace," Dergarabedian said. "This might have benefited from a platform release given the subject matter and the cast."

The acclaimed documentary "Apollo 11" also opened on 120 IMAX screens to $1.65 million.

Many people, however, used this weekend to catch-up with the big winners at the Oscars, which took place last Sunday.

Best-picture winner "Green Book" got the biggest post-Oscars bump, adding $4.71 million over the weekend from theaters. To date, "Green Book" has earned $75.2 million in North America and $188 million worldwide.

The Universal-distributed film from Participant Media more than doubled its theater count to 2,641 theaters and broke into the top 5 in its 16th weekend, not to mention the fact that it's also available to rent on the small screen too.

For comparison, last year's best picture winner "The Shape of Water" added $2.3 million on the weekend following the Academy Awards, although that was playing in about 1,000 fewer theaters.

"Green Book" wasn't the only award-winner adding profits this weekend. Best Animated Feature winner "Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse" banked an additional $2.1 million, the encore version of "A Star Is Born" with 12 additional minutes of footage added $1.9 million, "Bohemian Rhapsody" earned $975,000 and "The Favourite" took in $825,000.

"People wonder why studios spend millions on Oscar campaigns: They're getting a nice boost and adding money even while they're available on the small screen," Dergarabedian said.

But overall the box office continues to struggle industry-wide. Both the year and the weekend are down 26 percent, in part due to the fact that there hasn't been any film comparable to "Black Panther," which accounted for the stellar early-year numbers in 2018.

Marvel is coming back to save the day yet again, however: "Captain Marvel" opens nationwide next weekend.

1. "**How To Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World**," $30 million ($52 million international).
2. Tyler Perry's "**A Madea Family Funeral**," $27 million ($58,000 international).
3. "**Alita: Battle Angel**," $7 million ($40.4 million international).
4. "**The Lego Movie 2: The Second Part**," $6.6 million ($6.1 million international).
5. "**Green Book**," $4.7 million ($31.9 million international).
6. "**Fighting With My Family**," $4.7 million ($2.3 million international).
7. "**Isn't It Romantic**," $4.6 million.
8. "**Greta**," $4.6 million ($400,000 international).
9. "**What Men Want**," $2.7 million ($1.1 million international).
10. "**Happy Death Day 2U**," $2.5 million ($6.2 million international).

Why small US theaters have canceled 'To Kill a Mockingbird'

NEW YORK (AP)—Dozens of community and nonprofit theaters across the U.S. have been forced to abandon productions of "To Kill a Mockingbird" under legal threat by Broadway and Hollywood producer Scott Rudin. The combative move has prompted calls for a boycott of Rudin's work.

Rudin is arguing that author Harper Lee signed over to him exclusive worldwide rights to the title of the novel and that Rudin's current adaptation on Broadway—written by Aaron Sorkin—is the only version allowed to be performed.

That means different adaptations have had to be scuttled in such small venues as the Grand Theatre in Salt Lake City; Mugford Street Players in Marblehead, Massachusetts; and the Kavinoky Theatre in Buffalo, New York, as well as a planned United Kingdom and Ireland tour. They had licensed the rights for a different version, written by Christopher Sergel and licensed by The Dramatic Publishing Company or DPC.

Cellist Yo-Yo Ma brings 'Day of Action' to Flint, Michigan

FLINT, Mich. (AP)—Yo-Yo Ma brought both music and a call for social change to Flint, Michigan, on Thursday.

The famed cellist performed for more than 100 fans inside a gymnasium at Berston Field House during his visit to the city that is still feeling the effects of a lead-contaminated water crisis.

But Ma said he found a city that is about much more than "water problems."

"That's not Flint. That's one aspect of it. There's a huge part of Flint that has that knowledge base and the willpower and the history and the looking forward to what's new, what's coming down the pike," he told The Associated Press in an interview.

The visit to Flint, as well as one a day earlier in Ann Arbor, was hosted by the University Musical Society, which is affiliated with the University of Michigan. It is all part of an effort by the 63-year-old musician to demonstrate culture's power to create moments of shared understanding and spur a conversation about culture and society.

"I'm interested in conversations because the music is there for people," Ma said. "And the music helps me go through life. It helps certain people go through life. But there are lots of people that are helping others go through life."

The event at Berston, a nearly 100-year-old complex that offers athletics, arts, education and social services, was free and open to the public. It featured speakers and musical performances, including by Ma, who wowed the crowd by playing a piece by Johann Sebastian Bach. Ma also did an impromptu number with a member of an African drum company, posed for pictures with dozens of fans and gave out just as many high-fives and hugs.

Earlier in the "Day of Action," as the Flint stop was called, Ma convened a meeting of dozens of local community leaders who discussed how cultural collaboration might bring about social change in the city of 100,000.

As for a takeaway from his visit, Ma said it will be "an awesome respect for the people here and for the dignity that they have and for the inner resources that they have."

Foundation of Prince's second wife to honor him at gala

NEW YORK (AP)—Andra Day, Dave Stewart of the Eurythmics and Philip Bailey and Verdine White of Earth, Wind & Fire will perform during a fundraising gala honoring Prince to benefit the foundation of his second wife, Manuela Testolini.

The evening Sunday to raise money for In a Perfect World will be hosted by Anthony Anderson. Bobby Brown, Beyonce's mother, Tina Knowles, Chaka Khan and Prince's "Purple Rain" co-star Apollonia Kotero were scheduled to attend.

Testolini, who was married to the late megastar from 2001 to 2007, told The Associated Press on Friday that performances will be heavy on Prince music. About 250 people are expected to attend in Los Angeles.

Prince came to mind as an honoree because In a Perfect World just completed construction of its 30th school in the same Malawi village where Testolini honored him with a school soon after his death in 2016, she said.

Known for his quiet philanthropy, Prince and Testolini met at his own foundation and he later encouraged her to continue that work.

Ex-Vegas headliner faints at 20-year sentence in porn case

LAS VEGAS (AP)—A former Las Vegas illusion show headliner from Germany appeared to faint Thursday while being sentenced to 20 years in prison and fined more than $500,000 in a federal child pornography case.

Jan Rouven Fuechtener, 40, stiffened and fell backward over his chair after Chief U.S. District Judge Gloria Navarro rejected his apology and his attempt to say he derived no gratification from thousands of pornographic videos and images the FBI found in password-protected files on nine computers at a home dubbed the "fun house."

Fuechtener recovered after a sip of water, without medical assistance. His attorneys, Russell Marsh and Sunethra Muralidhara, said later it wasn't clear if he ever lost consciousness.

The judge branded Fuechtener a shameless liar and manipulator who dragged out his court proceedings "like a soap opera" and only regretted he got caught. She ordered Fuechtener to pay an additional $70,000 in restitution to victims identified in the videos.

"This is not acceptable, here or in Germany or anywhere," the judge said, describing the videos as "not just children having sex, but sadistic violent acts."

Earlier, prosecutor Elham Roohani sobbed as she recounted the "heart-wrenching screams" and "whimpers" of children forced into sex with adults on files she viewed preparing the criminal case.

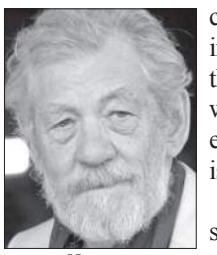
Still, Navarro sentenced Fuechtener to less than the 23 years recommended by federal parole and probation officials and 30 years sought by prosecutors. The judge said Fuechtener might be 60 before he gets out of prison and will probably be deported back to Germany.

Fuechtener blamed his pornography collection on boredom, a methamphetamine habit and people he surrounded himself between his six shows a week at the Tropicana resort while his husband, Frank Dietmar Alfter, traveled around the world. The show closed following Fuechtener's arrest in March 2016.

Alfter now lives in Germany. The house was sold in 2016 and Fuechtener deposited money in a trust account for fines and restitution.

Fuechtener stopped his trial before videos were aired publicly by pleading guilty in November 2016 to possession, receipt and distribution of child pornography.

Ian McKellen has apologized for remarks about Spacey, Singer


McKellen

LONDON (AP)—Actor Ian McKellen has apologized for remarks in which he appeared to suggest that allegations of sexual abuse that have been leveled against Kevin Spacey and Bryan Singer resulted from the entertainers' unease with their own sexuality.

McKellen tweeted Saturday that comments made during the live #QueerAF podcast were "clumsily expressed." He said "I suggested that if closeted people were instead open about their sexuality they wouldn't abuse others. That, of course, is wrong."

He went on to say that he "would never, ever trivialize or condone abuse of any kind. I deeply regret my careless remarks and apologise unreservedly for any distress I caused."

Both Spacey and Singer have denied wrongdoing in relation to the allegations.

SHOWBIZ TIDBITS

Young adult novel pulled amid online criticisms

NEW YORK (AP)—The author of a debut young adult novel has pulled his book amid criticism of how it portrayed the Kosovo War of the late 1990s. Kosoko Jackson tweeted Thursday that he had asked his publisher to withdraw "A Place for Wolves," scheduled for release in March. Jackson's book was set during a time when Serbian and Yugoslav forces were murdering Muslim Albanians in Kosovo. On Goodreads and elsewhere online, "A Place for Wolves" was sharply criticized for centering the narrative on two Americans and having a Muslim terrorist as a villain, even though Muslims were being killed. Jackson apologized Thursday for doing a "disservice" to those who suffered. In late January, Amélie Wen Zhao delayed her fantasy novel "Blood Heir" after complaints on social media it was racially insensitive.

Gray Television hires Van Susteren for local stations

NEW YORK (AP) — Cable news veteran Greta Van Susteren is trying out local TV by joining Gray Television, which owns stations in more than 90 markets across the United States. Van Susteren will be chief national political analyst for the Gray stations, and is developing two nationally syndicated shows for the company. She's keeping her current job as host of a program for Voice of America that airs outside of the U.S. Van Susteren owns a rare TV trifecta: she hosted programs on CNN, Fox News Channel and MSNBC. But she says candidates in the upcoming presidential election will be eager to target audiences in certain states, and Gray is well situated to provide access. She said in an interview Thursday that she believes local stations will become much more influential.

HBO CEO Plepler exits in wake of AT&T acquisition

LOS ANGELES (AP) — HBO's chief executive said he is exiting the cable channel, a decision that comes less than a year after AT&T acquired HBO's parent company. "Hard as it is to think about leaving the company I love, and the people I love in it, it is the right time for me to do so," Plepler said in a memo Thursday to HBO staffers that was obtained by The Associated Press. During Plepler's nearly 28-year tenure, the premium channel fielded popular and award-winning series including "The Sopranos," ''Game of Thrones," ''Girls," ''Big Little Lies" and "Band of Brothers." With the advent of streaming, the HBO Go and HBO Now platforms were started under his direction. Last June, a federal judge approved AT&Ts merger with Time Warner, a deal worth more than $80 billion. In his memo, Plepler said his decision came at an "inflection point" in the life of HBO. He said he was proud of the company and expected it to continue to thrive. He referred to moving on to "the next chapter of my life" but offered no details. Plepler, who joined HBO in 1992, served as co-president from 2007 to 2012. He was named chairman and CEO in 2013. HBO declined comment on his departure or his successor.

Posthumous Dr. Seuss book coming Sept. 3

NEW YORK (AP) — There is no muse like Dr. Seuss. An unfinished manuscript by the late children's author is the basis for "Dr. Seuss's Horse Museum," coming Sept. 3. Random House Children's Books announced Thursday that illustrator Andrew Joyner completed the text, which has a look "both subtly Seussian and wholly his own." The book features horse artwork by Pablo Picasso and Jackson Pollock among others and will include cameos from such Seuss favorites as the Grinch and the Cat in the Hat. Dr. Seuss, whose real name was Theodore Geisel, died in 1991. A posthumous release in 2015, "What Pet Should I Get," was a best-seller. Joyner's previous credits include "Too Many Elephants in This House" and "The Swap."

Posthumous memoir by gay rights pioneer due in October

NEW YORK (AP) — A posthumous memoir by gay rights pioneer Edie Windsor will be released in October. Windsor's "A Wild and Precious Life" will draw upon her uncompleted manuscript and other personal papers, St. Martin's Press announced Thursday. The book was finished by Joshua Lyon, with cooperation from her spouse, Judith Kasen-Windsor. "A Wild and Precious Life" will include everything from her childhood to her coming out as a lesbian to the 2013 Supreme Court ruling she helped bring about that led to same-sex marriage nationwide. Windsor, who died in 2017, challenged a federal law that would have only granted her an inheritance tax break if she married a man. She was facing a big tax bill after the death of her first wife, Thea Spyer, whom she had married in Canada.

Oskar Schindler's personal possessions hit auction block

BOSTON (AP) — Several personal possessions of Oskar Schindler, the German industrialist who saved the lives of about 1,200 Jews during World War II, are up for auction. Schindler's Longines wristwatch, a compass he and his wife reportedly used in 1945 as they fled advancing Russians, two Parker fountain pens, and several other items are being sold by Boston-based RR Auction. The belongings being sold as a package are expected to fetch about $25,000 in the auction that ends March 6. RR's Executive Vice President Bobby Livingston says the possessions are from the estate of Schindler's wife, Emilie, who died in 2001. Schindler, a Nazi party member whose story was told in the 1993 Oscar-winning movie "Schindler's List," saved Jews by employing then in his enamelware and munitions factories. He died in 1974.

Teen's tall tales of dating a star shock her friends

DEAR ABBY: I am a 15-year-old girl. I have been friends with "Amanda" for two years. She helped me through a really tough time, which is how we became friends.

Recently, she has been going around telling people she is dating someone famous from a band and claiming she gets to hang out with them all the time. It is really stressful.

My other friend and I don't understand why Amanda is doing this. We think it's wrong to tell people these lies. When we have asked her about it, she always gets defensive and lies to us. She blocked my friend and me on Instagram, and that really upset us as well.

We don't know what to do. We know you give great advice, and we hope you can help us with this.

STRESSED OUT IN IOWA

DEAR STRESSED OUT: People lie for various reasons—to make others think they are important, popular, smarter or more successful than they really are. Sometimes it works. More often, when the truth comes out, the liar looks foolish and untrustworthy.

Unfortunately, there is nothing you can do to fix Amanda. You tried and it didn't work, so step aside. This is a lesson she will have to learn on her own.

DEAR ABBY: My daughter invited me to a celebration of life for a schoolmate of hers. Everyone gathered outside at a park pavilion to listen to a minister and friends or family speak about the deceased.

Twenty minutes before the last speaker was done I noticed my 22-year-old grandson had gone inside the building where there was food for everyone. When I asked my daughter where he had gone, she said he had gone to the bathroom. Abby, there were no restrooms in the building.

When the speakers were finished, the minister invited everyone to go inside for food and refreshments. When my daughter and I went inside, there sat my grandson eating away. He was the only person doing so. I asked my daughter why he was eating before everyone had even been invited, and her answer was, "He's a growing boy."

I thought what he did was rude and uncalled for. Am I too old school, or am I out of touch with the new "way"?

GRANDDAD IN KANSAS

DEAR GRANDDAD: You are not out of touch. Your grandson's behavior was selfish and insensitive. Someone should have mentioned that fact to him. He's not a growing boy. He's an adult with boorish manners.

DEAR ABBY: My husband and I have been trying to have a child for a while now. I am finally pregnant, but he is on the fence about wanting to keep the pregnancy because of the possibility of it being twins. What should I do?

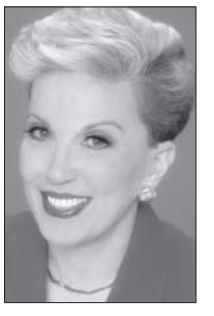
WORRIED LOVESICK WIFE

DEAR WORRIED: It's a little late for your husband to be waffling. He should have considered this possibility when he put you on the path to motherhood and be grateful if the baby/babies are born healthy. Remind him that regardless of whether there will be one or two bundles of joy, your husband will be responsible until he, she or they are adults. If he can't accept that, then what you should do is marry someone mature and stable enough to accept his responsibilities as a husband the next time around.

To order "How to Write Letters for All Occasions," send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby – Letter Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. Shipping and handling are included in the price.

DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE



Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

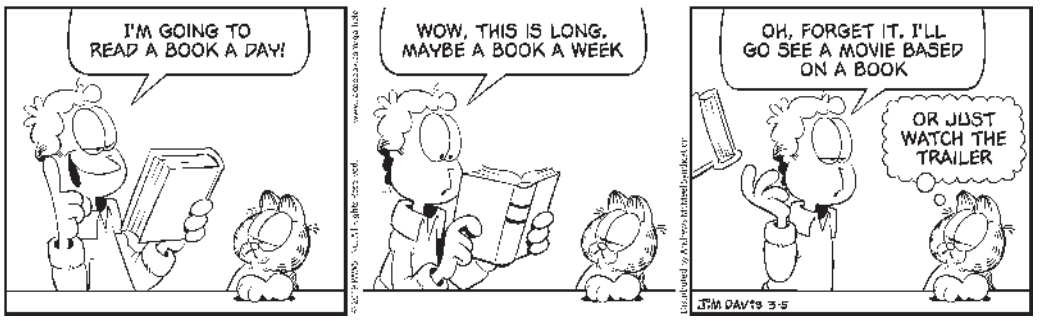
Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

CAN YOU BELIEVE THIS? I'VE GOT TO ASSEMBLE MY BEANIE PROPELLER AND MOTOR MYSELF!
WHAT DO THEY THINK, I AM, AN ENGINEER? LOOK, I'VE GOT TO INSERT THESE WIRES AND THIS PLASTIC SWITCH! I CAN'T DO THIS!
HERE, LET ME TRY.
NO! GET AWAY! I'LL DO IT! YOU'D PROBABLY GOOF IT ALL UP, OR...
SNAP
OH NO!
SEE? INSULT A TIGER AND YOU GET BAD LUCK! EVERY TIME!

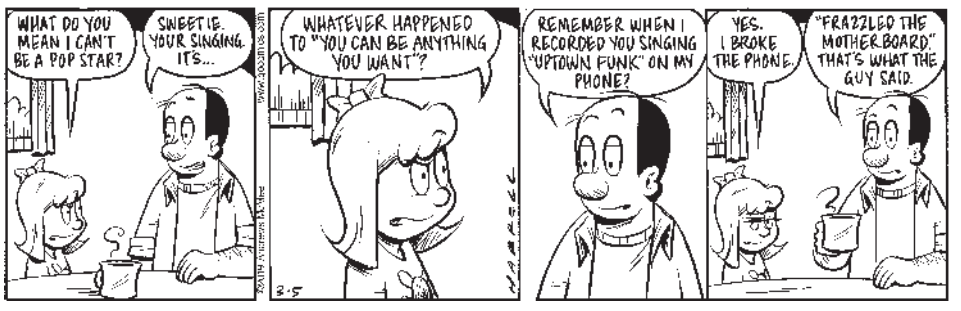
Garfield®

By Jim Davis


I'M GOING TO READ A BOOK A DAY!
WOW, THIS IS LONG. MAYBE A BOOK A WEEK
OH, FORGET IT. I'LL GO SEE A MOVIE BASED ON A BOOK
OR JUST WATCH THE TRAILER
JIM DAVIS 3-5

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


WHAT DO YOU MEAN I CAN'T BE A POP STAR?
SWEETIE. YOUR SINGING. IT'S...
WHATEVER HAPPENED TO "YOU CAN BE ANYTHING YOU WANT"?
REMEMBER WHEN I RECORDED YOU SINGING "UPTOWN FUNK" ON MY PHONE?
YES. I BROKE THE PHONE.
"FRAZZLED THE MOTHERBOARD." THAT'S WHAT THE GUY SAID.

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

YOU KNOW, ENO, IT'S OKAY IF YOU LIE A LITTLE ON YOUR ONLINE DATING PROFILE.
LIKE HOW?
WELL, FOR EXAMPLE, LIST YOUR HOBBIES AS THINGS LIKE JUDO, RACING SPORTS CARS,...
YEAH. YOU'RE RIGHT.
THAT SOUNDS BETTER THAN "POPPING BUBBLE WRAP."

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Hula swivelers
5 Kvetch
9 Comedian Margaret
12 Inky stain
13 Stead
14 Bond rating
15 Sooner State native
17 "The A-Team" actor
18 Trails
19 Rose parts
21 Halloween disguises
24 Rating unit
25 iPhone downloads
26 Skunk relatives
30 "— was saying ..."
31 Passion
32 — tai
33 Olympic winner
35 Poet of yore
36 Dutch cheese
37 Arm bones
38 Peer in a box
40 The Emerald Isle
42 Branch
43 Intermediary
48 "Patience — virtue"
49 Thus
50 Corn recipe
51 PC linkup
52 Calendar squares
53 Fill up

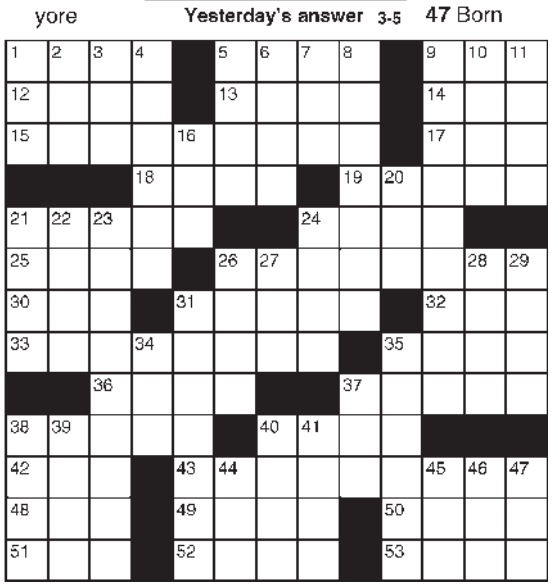
DOWN

1 "Veep" airer
2 Sort
3 D.C. figure
4 Celery servings
5 Drain blockage
6 Intends
7 Actor Stephen
8 Groan-inducing humorist
9 TV station employee
10 Injure
11 Feed-bag filler
16 Possesses
20 Tic- — -toe
21 Sir's counterpart
22 Church section
23 Peter Parker's alter ego
24 Coin aperture
26 Prudish
27 Takes too much, in med. lingo
28 Skater Lipinski
29 Faction
31 Fear-stricken
34 Big fuss
35 Censors
37 Internet address
38 Hoosegow
39 Celestial bear
40 Jittery
41 Altar vows
44 Roth svgs. plan
45 Extinct bird
46 Picnic crasher
47 Born

Solution time: 22 mins.

T	I	E	D		C	A	B		C	L	A	N
A	F	T	C	R	Y	O	U		T	I	N	C
B	A	S	E	B	A	L			T	E	N	T
			D	I	N		K	N	A	V	E	S
A	P	S	E	S		S	M	E	W			
P	E	L	E		T	E	A	B	A	L	L	
P	S	I		A	H	A	I	R		O	A	R
	C	O	D	B	A	L		B	A	D	E	
			A	C	N	E		F	A	M	E	D
G	D	A	N	S	K		U	A	R			
R	A	N	G		F	A	S	T	B	A	L	L
I	D	O	L		U	N	D	E	R	C	A	T
M	A	N	E		L	E	A		A	R	T	S

Yesterday's answer 3-5



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call 1-900-226-5955! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Kevin Connolly, 45; Matt Lucas, 45; Eva Mendes, 45; Dean Stockwell, 83.

Happy Birthday: Look at your options and concentrate on what's most important to you. If you try to take on too much this year, you will end up scrambling. Choose wisely, and call in favors if it will help you reach your target. Keep your emotions under control and your eyes fixed on what you are trying to achieve. Avoid impulsive decisions. Your numbers are 7, 10, 18, 22, 25, 38, 43.

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Choose options that won't cement you into something you may decide you don't want to do. Leaving room to make adjustments will ensure you can take advantage of a last-minute change of plans you want to make. ✪✪✪

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Listen to what others have to say, and offer suggestions that are reasonable. Your input will determine who joins forces with you. If you apply pressure, expect to go it alone. An impulsive move will backfire. ✪✪✪✪

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Physical problems will occur if you overdo it. Don't let anyone coerce you into doing something that isn't healthy. Indulgent behavior on your part or on the part of someone you hang out with will lead to regret. ✪✪

CANCER (June 21-July 22): Take the plunge and follow your heart, your intuition and your emotions. Express your feelings and discuss plans with someone you want to get into a joint endeavor with. Enjoy the journey. An unusual suggestion will surprise you. ✪✪✪✪✪

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): One step at a time. If you rush into something, you will face unexpected changes that will result in adversity. Be upfront about what you want to see happen, and don't get involved or take on someone else's battle. ✪✪✪

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): You'll avoid being taken advantage of or pushed into something that is costly or unsafe if you are upfront about what you want, what you are willing to do and what you expect in return. Communication can save the day, so start talking. ✪✪✪

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): You may feel like making a change, but the obstacles you face will make it difficult. Take care of responsibilities before you take on something new. You stand a better chance if you go solo when it comes to personal adjustments. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Communicate, interact with the people you encounter and consider the information you gather. You'll come to a conclusion regarding your health and personal connection to someone who brings out the worst in you. Consider letting go and moving on. ✪✪✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Think twice before you follow someone down a dark path. False information and ulterior motives are apparent, and someone trying to take advantage of your kindness and generosity will break your trust. Take a step back and rethink your next move. ✪✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): The past holds memories and experiences that will help you forge into the future with certainty, integrity and the ability to get ahead. Don't allow anyone to misdirect you or get in your way. Do your own thing. ✪✪✪✪

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Take better care of yourself, your health and your emotional well-being. Stay focused on what you can do to make your life and the lives of those around you better. Offer help, not conflict, and avoid a confrontation. ✪✪✪

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Slow down. Take better care since minor accidents or sicknesses will set you back. Keep your life simple, and don't take on more than you can handle. Protect your reputation by offering the truth with facts to back your accusations. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are sensitive, caring and demonstrative. You are helpful and generous.

To submit astrological questions to the "Dear Eugenia" column, visit Eugenialast.com, or join Eugenia on Twitter/Facebook/LinkedIn.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

	5				9	2	
9			3				8
				8		6		3
	2		7		1		
		9				8		
			8		5		6	
5		2		3			
6					2			1
	4	7				8	

Difficulty Level ★★ 3/05

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

7	8	5	3	1	2	4	9	6
6	3	9	5	4	7	8	1	2
1	4	2	8	9	6	7	5	3
3	9	4	6	7	8	1	2	5
5	6	8	1	2	9	3	4	7
2	7	1	4	3	5	6	8	9
8	5	7	9	6	4	2	3	1
4	2	3	7	5	1	9	6	8
9	1	6	2	8	3	5	7	4

Difficulty Level ★

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

EVENING ATTIRE — Solution: 5 letters

G	R	S	E	I	R	O	S	S	E	C	C	A	F	C
L	E	S	C	S	O	T	T	E	L	I	T	S	O	U
I	Z	U	T	A	L	U	F	R	O	L	O	C	R	F
T	A	Y	Q	R	R	I	N	G	B	C	K	O	M	F
T	L	Z	N	I	A	F	S	E	L	T	S	T	A	L
E	B	T	E	F	N	P	A	A	A	L	S	I	L	I
R	E	I	P	W	A	U	S	I	E	C	A	L	L	N
E	L	L	O	R	T	S	L	E	A	T	H	E	R	K
V	T	G	K	I	Y	E	H	A	N	D	B	A	G	S
L	S	L	F	E	N	S	U	I	T	I	N	G	H	S
I	E	U	T	I	R	A	E	W	O	D	E	X	U	T
S	L	I	H	L	I	A	T	E	D	N	C	I	H	C
O	E	S	U	O	L	B	L	A	C	K	T	I	E	E
S	S	S	C	I	R	B	A	F	E	S	T	I	V	E
G	O	L	D	E	R	O	L	I	A	T	U	L	L	E

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Accessories, Ascot, Beautiful, Belts, Black Tie, Blazer, Blouse, Chic, Classy, Cocktail, Colorful, Cuff Links, Detail, Fabrics, Fashion, Festive, Flare, Formal, Glitter, Glitz, Gold, Gown, Handbag, Heels, Lace, Leather, Open, Ring, Scarf, Shine, Silk, Silver, Sparkle, Stilettos, Straps, Style, Suiting, Suits, Tailored, Ties, Tulle, Tuxedo, Unique, Wear

Yesterday's Answer: Wrinkled

To purchase THE COLLECTED WONDERWORD, Volumes 39 through 54, order online at www.WonderWordBooks.com.

CLASSIFIED ADS

EMPLOYMENT

1 Commercial Cleaner, 1 General Maintenance - 3-5 years experience with valid driver's license. Police Clearance required. Email resume to BFJ Corporation at cisco.cnmi@yahoo.com

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JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT # 01-2019

Opening date: March 04, 2019 Closing date: March 22, 2019

Positions:
(4) ARFF Trainee (Saipan)
(1) Equipment Operator-I (Saipan)
(1) Custodial-I (Saipan)
(3) Ports Police Officer-I (Saipan)
(1) Ports Police/ARFF Trainee (Rota)

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Jaguars to sign Foles as replacement for Bortles

AP
Philadelphia Eagles quarterback Nick Foles, left, passes under pressure from Los Angeles Rams nose tackle Ndamukong Suh during the second half in an NFL football game Sunday, Dec. 16, 2018, in Los Angeles.

FLORIDA— With the ever-present caveat that nothing is done until pen meets paper, it certainly looks like former Philadelphia Eagles quarterback Nick Foles is heading to Jacksonville.

The Super Bowl LII MVP is expected to sign the with Jaguars when free agency opens on March 13, according to Les Bowen of the Philadelphia Inquirer.

That would also presume the Jaguars are cutting ties with former first-round pick Blake Bortles as the franchise quarterback.

The Eagles previously declined to use the franchise tag on Foles after he opted out of his contract, making the on-again, off-again starter a free agent as the club focuses on moving forward with Carson Wentz at the helm. Foles, 30, went 10-3 as a starter over the last two years with Philadelphia (including 4-1 in the playoffs) while passing for 12 touchdowns and six interceptions in the regular season.

The same report notes that there doesn't seem to be a large market for Foles' services, so a record-breaking contract isn't necessarily a lock in Jacksonville. Yet it certainly seems like both sides are finding each other at the right time. Had Foles not opted out in Philadelphia, the Eagles were due to pay him $20 million next year.

The Jaguars are coming off a dreadful season after making the playoffs in 2017 for the first time in a decade. Bortles passed for 2,718 yards, 12 touchdowns and 11 interceptions on the year to finish with a QB rating of 79.8. Foles finished last season with a rating of 96. Pairing Foles in an offense with running back Leonard Fournette and wideouts Marqise Lee, Dede Westbrook and Donte Moncrief might not fix everything right away, but it's a unit that's in need of retooling rather than rebuilding.

Upgrading an offensive line that allowed 53 sacks last season (third-worst in the league) can certainly help. The addition of John DeFilippo as offensive coordinator should give Jacksonville a nice boost as well. Especially if the plan is to sign Foles. DeFilippo was the quarterbacks coach in Philadelphia during the 2017 season that brought home the only Super Bowl title in team history.

It all makes for a natural landing spot for Foles. What happens next to Bortles is a bit tougher to pin down. After signing a three-year, $56 million deal in 2018 with $26.5 million guaranteed, a trade seems rather unlikely. He's also due another million if he makes the roster in 2019 and carries a cap hit of $21 million.

Jacksonville has tried its best to make Bortles work and it seems to have run its course. As the first quarterback taken off the board in 2014 with the No. 3 pick, Jacksonville not only passed up the chance to draft the likes of Teddy Bridgewater and Jimmy Garoppolo later on, but missed out on Khalil Mack, Aaron Donald and Odell Beckham Jr.—who were all taken after Bortles.

Hindsight is always used against general managers in the draft, but in a first round that produced 13 Pro Bowlers in the first 17 picks, the Jaguars wound up with one of the four players who hasn't been named as one of the game's best since.

With Foles, Jacksonville seeks a chance to correct that.

Meanwhile, the Kansas City Chiefs are placing the franchise tag on Dee Ford, who was poised to hit free agency after the best season of his career.

The person spoke on condition of anonymity Saturday because the paperwork has not been complete.

The franchise tag for an outside linebacker next season is just over $15.4 million, though the Chiefs have expressed interest in signing Ford to a long-term deal. They are also open to trading him if the right offer came along as they switch from a 3-4 to a 4-3 base defense.

ESPN.com was first to report that the Chiefs were franchise Ford.

Ford was the Chiefs' first-round pick in 2014 out of Auburn, but he struggled with injuries and the adjustment to the NFL his first couple seasons. He only played in six games with two sacks in 2017, but had a career-best 13 sacks and forced seven fumbles this past season.

In other development, the Eagles have locked down center Jason Kelce.

The Eagles have agreed to a one-year contract extension for the two-time Pro Bowler, they announced on Saturday, which will keep him with the Eagles through 2021.

The deal also makes the 31-year-old the highest-paid center in the league. Kelce was owed $13.5 million over the next two years. He'll now average $11 million per season with the new deal.

Kelce, the older brother of Kansas City Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce, was drafted in the sixth round of the 2011 NFL draft. He has played all eight of his seasons in the league with the Eagles, and has played in every game for Philadelphia in the last four years, too.

Sweat set big-man record for 40-yard dash

Mississippi State defensive end Montez Sweat has some serious straight-line speed.

Sweat set an NFL scouting combine record on Sunday morning when he posted a 4.41-second 40-yard dash. That's the fastest 40 ever run by a defensive lineman at the combine. He measured in at just under 6-foot-6 and at 260 pounds and that 40 time would have ranked him in the top three of running backs and the Top 10 of wide receivers.

The previous combine record for a defensive lineman was held by Emmanuel Lawson. He ran a 4.43 in 2006. Sweat unofficially was clocked at 4.42 seconds in his first 40 attempt and it was adjusted by a hundredth of a second when the time was made official.

Sweat is projected as a likely early pick in the 2019 NFL draft thanks to his college production and an impressive Senior Bowl. A fast 40 time is going to boost his stock even more despite the fact that defensive ends rarely, if ever, have to run 40 yards at top speed on a football field.

The DE had 50 tackles and nine sacks in 2018. He was tied for fourth in the SEC in sacks and also forced a fumble. Sweat's combine weight was 15 pounds above his listed weight in 2018. That will serve him well in the NFL in the quest to be an every-down defensive end and edge rusher.

Sweat wasn't the only defensive lineman who put up a blazing 40 time for his size. Michigan's Rashan Gary ran an official 4.58-second 40 at 277 pounds.

Meanwhile, the buzz around D.K. Metcalf at the NFL scouting combine might have reached a crescendo.

The Ole Miss wide receiver, who earlier went viral on Twitter for a photo showing his physique alongside teammate A.J. Brown, had already turned heads earlier in the week when he weighed in at 6-3 and 228 pounds, saying he had only 1.9 percent body fat. And on Saturday, he once again astounded in testing with an official 4.33-second run in the 40-yard dash.

The top mark in the first two days of the combine belong to Ohio State wide receiver Parris Campbell and Massachusetts wide receiver Andy Isabella, who clocked in with an official mark of 4.31 seconds. Metcalf tied for second among all wide receivers with Georgia's Mecole Hardman.

Metcalf also posted 27 bench press reps of 225 pounds, tied for first among all receivers, and had a 40 1/2-inch vertical leap, the best at his position.

Speaking with reporters on Friday, Metcalf said he's received plenty of attention since the photo of him began making the rounds.

"I didn't think it was going to explode like that," said Metcalf, whom Raiders coach Jon Gruden compared to Jim Brown. "A lot of people hit me up, 'What's your workout plan?' and I'm like, 'I'm just training for the combine.'"

In other news, Tyree Jackson was never at risk of being overlooked at the scouting combine.

At 6-7 and 249 pounds, the Buffalo quarterback is the biggest passer in Indianapolis. But despite his size, Jackson posted the second-best 40-yard dash time at his position Saturday by clocking in at 4.59 seconds officially. Only Penn State's Trace McSorley topped his time with a 4.57-second mark.

Jackson also had the top vertical jump among quarterbacks at 34 1/2 inches and tied with Duke's Daniel Jones for the longest broad jump at 10-0.

For Jackson, who also participated in the Senior Bowl, the performance is a chance to convince teams that he's worth the investment as a developmental prospect. He threw for 3,131 yards and 28 touchdowns in 2018 but completed just 55.3 percent of his passes.

"Right now, I'm just focused on the day-to-day process," Jackson told reporters on Friday. "If you look down to the draft right now, you're going to miss what's in front of you. Right now I have a great opportunity to go out there and showcase my abilities on a national stage at the combine, so that's all I'm looking forward to right now."

Angels considering $350M extension deal for Trout

LOS ANGELES—With Bryce Harper and Manny Machado recently signing deals worth $300 million and $330 million respectively, the price tag for Los Angeles Angels outfielder Mike Trout figures to have gone up.

The two-time American League MVP has two seasons remaining on a six-year, $144.5 million deal but has not indicated whether he intends to remain with the team after 2020.

But The Athletic's Ken Rosenthal reported the Angels recently have at least considered offering Trout a 10-year extension worth $350 million. Combined with the final two years of his existing contract, that would work out to 12 years and $416 million.

Trout grew up in the small town of Millville, N.J., located about 50 miles from Philadelphia, and is a die-hard Philadelphia Eagles' fan. Rumors of Trout having interest in playing for the Phillies someday gained momentum with Harper subtly lobbying for Trout to join him in Philadelphia when he becomes a free agent.

Meanwhile, Milwaukee Brewers reliever Bobby Wahl will likely miss the entire 2019 season with a torn ACL in his right knee, the team announced.

The hard-throwing right-hander suffered the injury during Friday's spring training game against the Seattle Mariners. He limped off the field after giving up a sacrifice fly to Mitch Haniger and later underwent an MRI.

Brewers general manager David Stearns confirmed the severity of the injury on Sunday and said Wahl will seek a second opinion.

In other news, the Rangers picked up outfielder Zack Granite in a trade with the Twins, the team announced Sunday. Minnesota received minor league reliever Xavier Moore and cash considerations in the deal. In a corresponding move, Texas placed outfielder Scott Heineman (labrum surgery) on the 60-day injured list to create roster space for Granite.

Granite, 26, was designated for assignment by Minnesota on Monday. Lingering shoulder and oblique issues complicated his plans to compete for a role within the organization, and as of 2019, he has not logged a single at-bat in the majors since his rookie campaign in 2017. Last year, he batted just .211/.282/.245 with eight extra-base hits and nine stolen bases (in 13 chances) through 263 PA at Triple-A Rochester.

Now healthy, he's expected to provide some outfield depth for the Rangers while trying to work his way back to a starting role. The latter may not be a feasible goal for the oft-injured center fielder, but his past performances in the minors indicate that he has the speed, if little else, to stick in the outfield on a regular basis.

The 20-year-old Moore is still getting the hang of things in Low-A ball. He'll continue his development in the minors this season after tossing a combined .5.30 ERA, 4.8 BB/9, and 10.1 SO/9 across 18 2/3 innings with the Rangers' Rookie and Low-A affiliates in 2018.

AP
Los Angeles Angels' Mike Trout signs autographs prior to a spring training baseball game against the Kansas City Royals Friday, March 1, 2019, in Tempe, Ariz.

Mitchell spoils Singh's date with history

The Honda Classic

PALM BEACH GARDENS, Fla.—There was still a group behind them, so the party moved to the practice green at PGA National.

Halfway between the scoring room and the 18th green, where Keith Mitchell had just sunk a birdie putt to win the Honda Classic, he was immediately greeted by friend and fellow St. Simons Island, Ga. resident, J.T. Poston.

Poston's caddie Aaron Flener was there too, both wearing street clothes after a T-36 finish. Flener is a mountain of a man and lifted Mitchell off the ground in a bear hug.

Shortly after the round was over, Mitchell was asked when it began to sink in that this could be his tournament.

"It hasn't yet," Mitchell said. "I think that's why I played so well. Those last four holes are so hard."

And yet, with no room for error, Mitchell navigated the closing stretch with a birdie at the par-3 15th and another 15-foot birdie make to close out the one-shot victory.

Mitchell, 27, shot 9-under 271 for the week and closed with a 3-under 67 for his first career Tour win. The winning putt meant avoiding a playoff with Brooks Koepka and Rickie Fowler, both of whom finished one shot back at 8 under for the week.

Mitchell's caddie, Peter Persolja, has been on the bag for four years—two on the Web.com Tour and two on the PGA Tour. He said Mitchell never wavered down the stretch, despite all the huge names next to him on the leaderboard.

"We just stuck to our game plan and never got frustrated," Persolja said. "He kept a really positive attitude all week long. That was it. Just stick to our game plan, pick a number, hit it, hope you pick the right club and go rock and roll"

Mitchell's mind was still spinning thinking about everything that comes with the victory—a two-year exemption and spots in the upcoming Players Championship and Masters, for starters.

In the final group of the day, Vijay Singh fell short in his attempt to become the oldest-ever winner on the PGA Tour at age 56. Singh was one shot off the lead when his tee shot found the hazard at the par-3 17th hole.

He took a one-shot penalty and made bogey, finishing with an even-par 70 on the day and solo sixth overall at 6 under. It was a throwback afternoon for Singh, who drew chants of "Let's go Vi-Jay" while still in contention down the stretch.

Koepka shot 4-under 66 in the final round and Fowler 67 to finish T-2.

"Happy for Keith," Fowler said. "You can't fake it around this place, so he went out and got the job done, and he earned it."

Fowler was involved in one of several high-profile rules incidents throughout the week, including Justin Thomas' back-and-forth with the USGA on Twitter, Alex Cejka's DQ for improper greens-reading materials and Fowler openly mocking the new knee-high drop rule.

In the end, a clinching birdie putt for a first-time winner helped end things on a high note throughout a thrilling final round at PGA National.

USGA, Justin Thomas to meet to talk rules changes

PALM BEACH GARDENS, Fla. (AP)—Justin Thomas and the USGA are taking their Twitter beef over rules changes offline.

USGA senior managing director of championships John Bodenhamer said Sunday that he hopes to meet with Thomas in the coming days to discuss some of his criticisms of the modernized Rules of Golf that took effect this year. The world's No. 3 player hasn't been shy about airing his displeasure about the changes both verbally and on social media, and the USGA's public-relations arm went back at him to suggest setting up a meeting.

"Look, it's clear, I'm sure to everyone, that direct communication is the best way to go," Bodenhamer told Golf Channel. "That's where we're going to go with this. We're going to talk with Justin, and we're happy we'll have an opportunity to have a conversation in a few days, hopefully."

The USGA said in a tweet that Thomas has canceled previous meetings. Thomas, speaking Sunday after his final-round 71 at the Honda Classic, said that is not correct.

"It was a little shocking," Thomas said of the Twitter back-and-forth. "I've had communication with the USGA and I've talked with a couple people about how I feel. ... It's a little upsetting just because it was inaccurate. I haven't canceled anything, especially any meetings. But it is what it is and all I want is the best for the game of golf and the best for the sport."

Thomas said there have been some attempts to set up calls, but his schedule over the last three weeks hasn't allowed one to happen.

The Honda Classic provided a plethora of rules-related issues and reactions.

Thomas was upset that he wouldn't have been able to replace the 9-iron that he bent when his follow-through went into a tree in the opening round. It was a moot point anyway, since Thomas said he didn't have a spare 9-iron with him at PGA National that day. But it was the bigger issue that he was upset about, and he wasn't alone as the week went along.

Alex Cejka was disqualified Thursday for using an oversized greens-reading book, which fell under the new changes. Rickie Fowler made a mockery of the new drop rule, one where players must release the ball from knee-level. Adam Schenk was told just before the start of his third round that he was being assessed a two-stroke penalty for his caddie being behind him as he prepared for a bunker shot in the second round.

"The rules have changed and I'm not a big fan of them. I disagree with some of them ... but at the end of the day, it's the Rules of Golf and we've got to play by them," said Ryan Palmer, who was playing with Cejka on Thursday. "I've been reading Twitter and reading comments and I'm not liking what people are saying about us as a whole, as tour players when it comes to the Rules of Golf.

"They're not great, that's for sure. Some of them are BS, that's for sure," Palmer added.

Schenk's issue was the one that had Thomas venting on Twitter, and had the USGA taking notice.

Westbrook helps Thunder rally past Grizzlies

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP)—Russell Westbrook turned back the clock a bit on Sunday.

Oklahoma City's All-Star point guard scored 12 of his 22 points in the fourth quarter, and the Thunder rallied from a 13-point deficit in the final seven minutes to snap a four-game losing streak with a 99-95 victory over the Memphis Grizzlies.

Westbrook shot 3 of 13 in the first three quarters, then went 4 for 7 in the fourth. It was similar to the late-game scoring binges he went on during his MVP season two years ago.

The Thunder needed every bit of it—forward Paul George, the NBA's No. 2 scorer and league leader in steals, missed his third straight game with a sore right shoulder.

Oklahoma City supported Westbrook's late surge by holding the Grizzlies to 6-for-21 shooting in the fourth.

"One of the things we talked about that I said before the game tonight is that we've got to create a defensive identity regardless,'" Thunder coach Billy Donovan said. "We have to defend at a higher level every single night. Offensively, we struggled to get any kind of flow or continuity there, but I give our guys credit—they still tried to work as hard as they could to defend, even though offensively, we had our challenges."

Cavaliers 107, Magic 93

In Cleveland, Kevin Love makes the Cavaliers a different basketball team.

The Orlando Magic learned that lesson Sunday night in what could be a costly loss for their playoff hopes.

A night after being held out of a 36-point loss to Detroit, Love had 16 points and 14 rebounds and the Cavaliers pulled away in the fourth quarter for a win.

Orlando, which was coming off wins over Golden State and Indiana, rallied to tie the game at 81 with seven minutes to play before Cleveland took over. The Cavaliers hit seven 3-pointers in the period, including two each by Jordan Clarkson and Cedi Osman.

Love is still progressing from foot surgery in November and has yet to play on back-to-back days. The five-time All-Star was ready after watching Saturday's 129-93 debacle.

D.J. Augustin added 19 points for the Magic, who hold a very slim lead over Charlotte and Miami for first place in the Southeast Division and the final playoff spot in the Eastern Conference.

Wizards 135, Timberwolves 121

In Washington, Bobby Portis' shooting touch returned Sunday and the Wizards picked up a win.

Portis had 26 points and 12 rebounds and the Wizards beat the Minnesota Timberwolves.

"Coming out after the All-Star break, really haven't had a good shooting night," said Portis, who had made 35.7 percent from the field over his last four games. "Been rebounding the ball pretty well, but haven't had that good shooting night like I wanted. So, I was due for one and tonight it happened."

Portis was 10 for 18 from the field, including 3 of 6 from 3-point range.

"Bobby's a good spacer and a good filler behind the screen and he can roll, and he has a nice floater," coach Scott Brooks said. "I mean, his floater hasn't been falling for him, but that's his shot and it fell tonight."

Bradley Beal and reserve Jabari Parker each scored 22 points for Washington, which had lost five of six and trail eighth-place Orlando by three games. Beal added eight assists.

Rockets 115, Celtics 104

In Boston, James Harden had 42 points before fouling out late in the fourth quarter and the Houston Rockets held on the beat the Celtics for their fifth straight victory.

Harden made six 3-pointers and scored 40 or more points for the 24th time this season. Houston entered the day in fifth place in the Western Conference standings, a game behind of fourth-place Oklahoma City.

Eric Gordon added 32 points and had eight 3-pointers.

Boston has lost five of last six. Kyrie Irving led the Celtics with 24 points, nine rebounds and six assists. Al Horford finished with 19 points.

Pistons 112, Raptors 107, OT

In Detroit, Blake Griffin scored 14 of his 27 points in the first quarter and Detroit outlasted Toronto.

Detroit took advantage of Toronto resting star forward Kawhi Leonard less than 48 hours after he made the go-ahead shot in the closing seconds in a victory over Portland.

Reggie Jackson scored 19 points for Deyroitm and Andre and Drummond had 15 points and 17 rebounds.

Kyle Lowry scored a season-high 35 points for Toronto. Pascal Siakam added 21.

Hawks 123, Bulls 118

In Chicago, Alex Len scored a season-high 28 points and Atlanta beat Chicago, two days after the Bulls outlasted the Hawks 168-161 in quadruple overtime in Atlanta

Len finished three points shy of his career high. He also made a personal-best five 3-pointers.

Trae Young scored 18 before getting ejected early in the third quarter for taunting Chicago's Kris Dunn for his second technical foul. Lauri Markkanen led Chicago with 19 points.

Clippers 128, Knicks 107

In Los Angeles, rookie Landry Shamet scored all of his 21 points on 3-pointers, Danilo Gallinari added 20 and Los Angeles sent New York to its 50th loss of the season.

Shamet and Gallinari combined for 27 of the Clippers' 38 points in the first quarter when they raced to a 38-20 lead. Shamet scored 18 points in the opening 12 minutes. He tied the franchise record for threes in a quarter (six) and a half (seven), and set a franchise rookie record for 3s in a single game.

Oklahoma City Thunder guard Russell Westbrook shoots the ball over Memphis Grizzlies center Jonas Valanciunas in the second half of an NBA basketball game, Sunday, March 3, 2019, in Oklahoma City.

AP

Silver: No easy solution on Davis' situation

NEW ORLEANS (AP)—The Anthony Davis saga will extend to the end of the season with him likely playing 20 minutes or so in every game he plays the rest of the way.

It's a compromise the New Orleans Pelicans came up with after they were told they wouldn't be able to sit Davis the rest of the season after deciding to hold onto him after the trade deadline. That decision came after a conversation with the league office.

On Friday at the MIT Sloan Sports Analytics Conference in Boston, NBA commissioner Adam Silver talked more about the Davis situation and while admitting there wasn't a simple solution, he also talked about not liking the current setup.

"Some things don't lend themselves to easy solutions," Silver said. "Playing him for three quarters and resting him in the fourth is not a good solution. Maybe we'll get to a different place."

For the rest of the season, Davis is set to play 20 minutes in the games he does play and will sit in back-to-backs. Davis played five to seven minutes in the first, second and third quarters and does not play in the fourth.

Many Pelicans fans and members of the media have questioned why the NBA won't simply allow Davis to be rested for the remainder of the season.

Silver, who said it was a "bad dynamic" in New Orleans, says there are still people who are paying to see Davis compete night in and night out.

"It's not good when a player whose agent shows up in a city he doesn't live in and announces this player doesn't want to be here," Silver said. "That's bad for the fans there. It's puts the league in a difficult position because back to the notion of an entertainment product because I can tell you, I look at the ratings and I can say the interest in the team is still going to be greater with Anthony Davis on the floor than when he's not on the floor. He is a top player in this league. People are paying to see him compete."

"If we were to say, fine, shelf him, rest him going forward, the people who are paying money to see him might say I want my money back. There's two side of these issues," he added.

Silver also fought back against the idea of sitting Davis because of the notion that Davis and company could have kept the issue private, would the team still sit him?

Still, there has been the notion that the NBA won't allow Davis to sit because of the fear of a lawsuit from the NBA player's association over the issue. However, the NBPA had no public issue with Cleveland sitting J.R. Smith, Houston sitting Carmelo Anthony or Memphis sitting Chandler Parsons this season.

Silver also said Pelicans owner Gayle Benson has done an "incredible job" considering the circumstances.

"She knows, assuming Anthony Davis moves on, she has to build a culture with her new team, she's got a build a basketball culture in a marker where one presumably didn't exist beforehand at least not for the last several years," Silver said. "And she has to figure out how to get the most value for this player and hire a new general manager."

Ultimately, Silver didn't come up with answers for the situation but did say the league is looking for more solutions in the long-term when it comes to contracts and keeping players with the team that drafted them.

"I don't have an easy solution to the facts at hand take with Anthony Davis, but I think there are long term solutions," Silver said. "We're constantly looking for a better system."

Garapan 1, San Vicente 2 unbeaten in pool play

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
roselyn_monroyo@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

San Vicente Elementary School 1 and Garapan 1 were undefeated in pool play in the Public School System Interscholastic Co-ed 4x4 Basketball Tournament held last Saturday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

Garapan 1 earned a 3-0 record in the preliminary round and San Vicente 2 got the same perfect mark, as the two top finishers will receive the higher seeding in the competition's playoffs this Saturday at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

William S. Reyes Elementary School 4 and Koblerville 2 wrapped up pool play with similar 2-1 records to place at No. 2, while Koblerville 1 (1-0), San Vicente 1 (1-2), WSR 1 (1-2), Koblerville 3 (0-3), WSR 3 (0-3), and WSR 2 (0-1) were the other teams that joined the pool play.

Organizers will determine the seeding later this week, as they are still waiting for Tinian and Kagman teams.

In the high school 3x3 tournament at the Koblerville Gymnasium, the seeding has been decided.

Marianas High School 1 is the No. 1 seed in the girls division and is followed by Saipan Southern High School, Tinian 1 and 2, and MHS 2. The girls competition will have a double-elimination format in the playoffs.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

A Garapan Elementary School 1 player is hounded by a Koblerville 3 defender during their pool play game in the Public School System Interscholastic Co-ed 4x4 Basketball Tournament last Saturday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

The same format will be in effect in the boys division, which has 12 teams with Kagman High School 1 the top seed in the group. Other squads playing in this weekend's tournament (seeding in order) are MHS 2, Da'Ok, SSHS 3, Tinian 1 and 2, MHS 1, MHS 3, SSHS 1, KHS 2, KHS 3, and SSHS 2.

FITIAL

From Page 28

days of my training so that we can execute our fight plan against Ben."

The 35-year-old Fitial, who once tipped the scales at 310 lbs and is now down to 230 lbs, hopes to work on his advantage in quickness and mixed style of fighting to beat the home crowd favorite.

"I am more of a well-rounded fighter now. I improved both my standup and ground fighting skills. The training under Jackson Wink MMA Academy early this year helped me a lot, plus the training I regularly have with Jerry keeps me in great shape," said Fitial.

The 6'3' warrior worked out in the MMA school based in Albuquerque, New Mexico for more than two weeks and was under the watchful eyes of renowned trainer Greg Jackson. The facility in New Mexico is known for training big names in the contact sport, including UFC light heavyweight champion Jon Jones, Diego Sanchez, and George St. Pierre.

"I've work a lot on my stamina, speed, and power when I was in Jackson Wink. It was really a great training for me and I am pretty happy where I am now and excited for the opportunities coming my way," Fitial said.

When he faces Sosoli, Fitial will be gunning for a third straight victory and No. 16 overall. After his win over the Australian, Fitial also topped Peter Miyasaki (Guillotine Choke/first round) in Rites of Passage 21: Throwdown in May 2017. In July 2016, the CNMI fighter absorbed his eighth loss when Guam's Roque Martinez beat him (unanimous) in PXC 54.

The 29-year-old Sosoli, on the other hand, managed to earn 3-0 record after bowing to Fitial. All three victories were via knockouts (punches) and were recorded against Gregory Hearne, Korea Maea, and Mike Turner. Overall, the Australian holds a 6-2 mark with his other loss against Simon Scott in 2015.

BLOWOUT

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Richard Steele paced MP United with his two goals, while Dylan Mister and Kristopher Pascual had one apiece. MP United got an own goal right in the third minute of the one-sided match.

BOYS U18
MP United 10, Kanoa 0

MP United triumphed, too in the opening game in the boys U18 division after crushing Kanoa last Friday.

CNMI national team member Sunjoon Tenorio made his presence felt early this season after tallying a hat trick. New recruit Kaden Church also had an impressive debut in MP United U18 uniform after posting two goals. Skyler Poon, Oliver Lee, Joshua Abragan, Jason Quimzon, and Jin Buen Eui had one goal each to complete MP United's rout of the hapless Kanoa.

TanHoldings 5, CNMI U15 0

In the other match in the division, TanHoldings blanked the CNMI U15 Boys National Team.

Three different players hit the board for TanHoldings with Taka Borka drawing first blood after finding his target in the eighth minute. Mark Esalan scored TanHoldings' other goal in the first half (24th minute) and got another one in the 49th, while the team's two other goals in the second frame came from John Michael Rojas and Brandon Tenorio.

Neymar says 2 injuries affected World Cup displays

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP)— Brazil and Paris Saint-Germain star Neymar was battling back from two injuries, not one, at last year's World Cup.

In a 2-hour interview with TV Globo on Sunday, Neymar said a problem in his right ankle was affecting his recovery in Russia, as well as the metatarsal fracture in the same foot that he had previously described.

"Besides the metatarsal, I had an ankle problem. I ruptured the ligament and the recovery was crazier because of this," the PSG striker said.

Neymar said the metatarsal injury did not unduly trouble him in Russia, but the ankle did. "It is very annoying with the ankle, it takes a long time to get back to normal," he said.

Brazil was eliminated by Belgium in the quarterfinals, and Neymar failed to deliver his best performances during the tournament.

Neymar is currently recovering in Brazil from another metatarsal injury in his right foot that he sustained in January, and is expected to return to action next month.

The former Barcelona forward talked about speculation he could one day join Real Madrid.

"It is one of the biggest clubs in the world, any player that Real Madrid seeks would be drawn into playing there. I am very happy at PSG. But no one knows the future," he said.

Recent videos have shown Neymar dancing at a party in Salvador, which has led to criticism about the way he is handling his recovery, but he said he would not be changing his ways.

"When people say Neymar's life off the pitch troubles him on the pitch ... No. You are completely wrong, it doesn't trouble him in any way. I am a man that takes care of himself. I know when I can go out," he said.

Meanwhile, two demoralizing defeats to Barcelona have left Real Madrid with just one chance to salvage its season by winning a record-extending fourth consecutive Champions League trophy.

But it must do without the goals of Cristiano Ronaldo, the star striker who fueled its title run before leaving for Juventus at the end of last season.

Madrid failed to score against Barcelona in two "clasico" matches at its Santiago Bernabeu Stadium in the past week. Barcelona eliminated Madrid from the Copa del Rey semifinals with a 3-0 victory on Wednesday, and three days later left Madrid 12 points adrift in the Spanish league with a 1-0 win.

Madrid could do with rediscovering its scoring form to avoid another calamity when it hosts Dutch side Ajax in the return leg of their Champions League round-of-16 tie on Tuesday. The visitors won the away leg in Amsterdam 2-1 thanks to goals from Karim Benzema and Marco Asensio.

AGAPE 2

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fastbreak buckets and making multiple trips at the stripe.

Co-captains A.J. Hudkins and Kuu Nishimura led the way for the Geckos, with the former scoring 24 points and the latter adding 9 markers. Ron Muna chipped in 8 points to provide the spark off the bench, while brothers J.P. and Jason Sablan contributed 6 and 3, respectively.

Isaiah He and Ray Qi had 10 apiece for Agape 2, while Hansen Li and Kobe Fu mustered 9 and 6 markers, respectively, and Daniel Dai and David Ji finished with 4 each.

The Torchbearers missed in their bid to enter the win column, but did not go without a fight, as they kept SIS at bay before the Geckos pulled away in the closing quarter. Agape 2 was down by only one after the first canto, 11-12 and behind by four at halftime, 23-27.

With the win, the Geckos improved to a 3-2 record and tied Agape 1 for fourth place, while Agape 2 dropped to a 0-7 mark.

Meanwhile, Mount Carmel School 1 doubled up MCS 2, 66-33, in their game at the Koblerville Gymnasium.

Mt. Carmel 1 now boasts a 5-2 record to remain in third place behind the undefeated Saipan Southern High School (5-0) and second-running Kagman High School (5-1). MCS 2 absorbed its fourth loss in five games to stay at the bottom half of the rankings.

In other results, Kagman glided past Grace Christian Academy, 73-30, last Friday. The Ayuyus handed the Eagles their fifth defeat in seven matches.

Saipan Southern and MCS 2 also played last Friday with the Manta Rays easing past the Knights at the Koblerville Gymnasium, 61-43.

The third game set for last Friday and featured the Geckos and Agape 1 never got to the opening tip because of lack of referees thus it will be rescheduled.

For today's double-header at the Koblerville Gymnasium, MCS 2 and Kagman will collide at 3:30pm, while Saipan Southern will take on Agape 1 at 4:30pm.

Jaguars to sign Foles as replacement for Bortles

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Westbrook helps Thunder rally past Grizzlies

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Blowout wins in opening week

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

The five teams that overwhelmed their opponents in the boys U15 and U18 divisions' opening games in the 2019 NMIFA Spring Youth League showed little or no signs of rust at all despite not playing in a regular tournament for a while.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Kanoa Football Club-1's Sean Gil, right, uses his body to keep the ball away from Matansa FC's Maui Johnson during their boys U15 division game in the 2019 NMIFA Spring Youth League last Saturday at the NMI Soccer Training Center.

In the first match in the boys U15 category at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville last Saturday, Kanoa Football Club-1 hammered Matansa, 12-0.

Siblings Markus and Merrick Toves powered Kanoa-1 to the lopsided victory after scoring three goals apiece. They got ample support from their teammates, as Jaydee Jose and Jim Kurt Maniago contributed two goals each, while Andrew Sablan and Brian Lubao added one.

Merrick made his hat-trick in the first half, while Sablan started things off for Kanoa-1 with his goal in the fourth minute to put the game away early. Jose recorded his brace for Kanoa-1's 6-0 halftime advantage.

In the second game, TanHoldings also earned an easy win over Kanoa-2, 10-0.

Oliver Fajardo and Anthony John Bergancia teamed up in TanHoldings' demolition of Kanoa-2 with the former firing four goals and the latter registering three. Kohtaro Goto chipped in two, while Eros Estolas had one.

Meanwhile, MP United joined TanHoldings and Kanoa-1 in the opening week's winners list after also shutting down Shirley's FC, 5-0.

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Fitial eyes repeat vs Aussie

Fourth-quarter surge powers SIS past Agape 2

By ROBY N. PAMINTUAN
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CORRESPONDENT

Saipan International School saved the best for last to top Agape Christian School 2, 58-39, in the boys division game in the 2018-2019 Commonwealth Coalition of Private Schools Association Varsity Basketball League yesterday at the latter's court in Gualo Rai.

The Geckos clung to a single digit lead after three cantos, 41-32, before finding their groove in the closing period, scoring 17 points—their biggest in a quarter—to beat the Torchbearers by 19.

SIS' airtight defense in the fourth period forced Agape to cough up the ball multiple times. The Geckos then capitalized on Agape's turnovers in the final frame, converting the errors into

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ROBY N. PAMINTUAN
Saipan International School's Kuu Nishimura drives baseline against Agape Christian School 2 defenders during their game in the CCOPSA caging yesterday at the Agape court in Gualo Rai.

PXC GUAM PHOTO
Kelvin Fitial, right, hits Ben Sosoli on the face during their heavyweight bout in the Pacific Xtreme Combat 56 in Guam in 2017. The two heavyweight fighters will meet anew later this month in the Hex Fight Series 18 in Australia.

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

The CNMI's Kelvin "The Big Hit" Fitial will see action in the premier mixed martial arts promotion in Australia when he takes on Ben "Seki" Sosoli in Hex Fight Series 18 on March 29.

Fitial will be facing a familiar foe in Sosoli at the Melbourne Pavilion in Victoria, as the two fighters had already clashed in 2017 in Pacific Xtreme Combat 56 in Guam. The Commonwealth bet won their first meeting via unanimous decision and is eyeing to make it two in a row against the Aussie.

"I am very happy and thankful for the opportunity to compete in Australia for the first time and fight Ben again," said Fitial, who trains with BBJ Athletics' Jerry Diaz. "I beat him before and I will do my very best to do it again. I don't want to be overconfident and I will focus on the remaining

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